

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF

Q. Q.

TO A PERIODICAL WORK

WITH SOME PIECES NOT BEFORE PUBLISHED

BY THE LATE

JANE TAYLOR.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

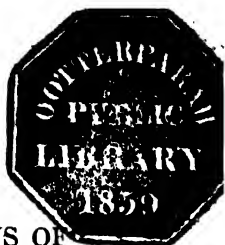
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THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF

Q. Q.

I.

THE SORE TONGUE.

THERE was a little girl called Fanny, who had the misfortune one day to bite her tongue as she was eating her breakfast. It hurt her so much that she could scarcely help crying; and even when the first smart was over it continued so sore that whenever she spoke it pained her considerably. Finding this to be the case, she said very pitifully to her mother, "Mamma, you can't think how it hurts me when I speak!" "Does it?" replied her mother, "then I'll tell you what I would advise you to do;—resolve all this day to say nothing but what is either *necessary* or *useful*; this will give your tongue a fine holiday, and may answer more purposes than one.

Fanny, knowing that she had the character of being somewhat loquacious, could not help laughing at this; and said, "Well, I will try for once; so, mum; I am going to begin now, mamma."

MOTHER. Do so: and whenever you are beginning to speak, be sure you ask yourself whether what you were going to say was likely to be of any use, or whether it was necessary.

FANNY. Yes, yes, "I will: but don't talk to me, mamma, for fear:—so saying, she screwed up her lips, and taking her work, sat for five minutes as still as a mouse. She then looked up, smiled, and nodded at her mother, as much as to say "see how well I can hold my tongue," still screwing her lips very tight for fear she should speak. Soon however she began to feel a great inclination to say something; and was glad to recollect that if she could but think of any thing either useful or necessary, she might speak. Whereupon she endeavoured to find something to say that would come *within the act*. To aid her invention, she looked all round the room:—

FANNY. Mamma, don't you think the fire wants stirring? (This question, she thought, savoured of both qualifications.)

MOTHER. Not at present, my dear.

Then followed another long silence; for Fanny found it vastly more difficult than she had any previous idea of, to think of any thing useful to talk

about; and she knew her mamma would laugh at her if she said what was obviously idle or silly, just now. She was beginning to repent having made such an agreement, when her three elder sisters entered the room. She now thought it quite reasonable, if not absolutely *necessary*, to tell them of her misfortune, which she did at considerable length, and with many needless digressions; (the usual custom with great talkers) upon which they all laughed; prophesying that her resolution would not last half an hour; and rallying her for telling such a long story with a sore tongue.

Soon after, some ladies called to pay their mother a morning visit. This gave Fanny's tongue such a long rest, that the moment they were gone it seemed irresistibly to resume its wonted functions.

FANNY. What a while old Mrs. W. has had that brown satin pelisse! Really, poor old lady, I am quite tired of seeing her in it!

MOTHER. How is your tongue, Fanny.

FANNY. O, better, mamma, thank you, almost well.

MOTHER. I am sorry for it: I was in hopes it would have been sore enough at least to prevent your making impertinent remarks upon any body all this day.

FANNY. No but really, mamma, is it not an old rubbishing thing?

MOTHER. I don't know, indeed; it is no business of mine; therefore I took no notice of it.

A silence ensued after this: but conversation revived when Caroline, who had stood for some time with her eyes fixed on their opposite neighbour's window, suddenly exclaimed, "I do believe the Jones's are going to have company again to day! the servant has just been lighting the fire in the drawing-room; and there is Miss Jones now gone up to dress; I saw her draw down the blinds in her room this instant." "So she is," said Lucy, looking up: "I never knew such people in my life! they are always having company."

"I wonder who they are expecting to day," said Eliza, "dinner company, I suppose."

The proceedings of their neighbours, the Jones's, continued to furnish matter for various sagacious conjectures and remarks for a considerable time: at length Caroline exclaimed with the eagerness of discovery—

"Look! look! there's the baker now at the door, with a whole tray full of tarts and things: make haste, or he'll be gone in."

LUCY. So he is, I declare; it is a dinner-party then: well, we shall see presently, I hope, who are coming.

CAROLINE. O no, they never dine till five, when they have company.

ELIZA. And it will be dark then; how tiresome!

LUCY. If Miss Jones is not dressed already ! she is this instant come into the drawing-room.

CAROLINE. Stand back, stand back ! don't let her see us all staring : ah, there she is ;—got on her pink sarcenet body and sleeves to day :—how pretty that dress is, to be sure !

ELIZA. And how nicely she has done her hair ; look Caroline—braided behind.

LUCY. There, she is putting down the sash. That chimney smokes, I know, with this wind.

FANNY. And there is that little figure, Martha Jones, come down now : do look, as broad as she is long : what a little fright that child is, to be sure !

MOTHER. Pray, Fanny, was that remark—*useful or necessary* ?

FANNY. O but mamma, I assure you, my tongue is quite well now.

MOTHER. I am sorry for it, my dear. Do you know, I should think it well worth while to bite my tongue every day, if there were no other means of keeping it in order.

At this the girls laughed ; but their mother resuming her gravity, thus continued :

“ My dear girls, I should before now have put a stop to this idle gossiping, if I had not hoped to convince you of the folly of it. It is no wonder, I confess, that at your age you should learn to imitate a style of remark which is but too prevalent in society.—Nothing indeed is more contagious : but let

me also tell you, that girls of your age, and of your *advantages*, are capable of seeing the meanness of it; and ought to despise it. It is the chief end of education to raise the minds of women above such trifling as this. But if a young person who has been taught to *think*, whose taste has been cultivated, and who might therefore possess internal resources, has as much idle curiosity about the affairs of her neighbours, and is as fond of retailing petty scandal concerning them, as an uneducated woman, it proves that her mind is incurably mean and vulgar, and that cultivation is lost upon her!

“ This sort of gossiping, my dear girls, is the disgrace of our sex. The pursuits of women lying necessarily within a narrow sphere, they naturally sink, unless raised by refinement, or by strong principle, into that *littleness of character* for which, even their own husbands and fathers (if they are men of sense) are tempted to despise them. The minds of men, from their engagements in business, necessarily take a larger range; and they are, in general, too much occupied with concerns comparatively important, to enter into the minute details which amuse women. But women of education have no such plea to urge. When your father and I direct you to this or that pursuit, it is not so much for the sake of your possessing that particular branch of knowledge; but that by knowledge *in general*, you may become intelligent and superior; and that you may

be furnished with resources which will save you from the *miserable necessity* of seeking amusement from intercourse with your neighbours, and an acquaintance with their affairs.

“ Let us suppose, now, that this morning you had been all more industriously inclined ; and had been engaged in any of your employments with that ardour which some happy young people manifest in the acquisition of knowledge ; would you, in that case, have felt any desire to know the date of Mrs. W’s pelisse ; or any curiosity in the proceedings of our neighbours the Jones’s ? No : you would then have thought it a most impertinent interruption, if any one had attempted to entertain you with such particulars : but when the mind is indolent and empty, then it can receive amusement from the most contemptible sources. Learn then, to check this mean propensity. Despise such thoughts whenever you are tempted to indulge them : recollect that this low curiosity is the combined result of idleness, ignorance, emptiness and ill-nature ; and fly to useful *occupation* as the most successful antidote against the evil. Nor let it be forgotten, that such impertinent remarks as these come directly under the description of those “ *idle words*,” of which an account must be given in the day of judgment. Yes, this vulgar trifling is as inconsistent with the spirit of Christian benevolence, and with the grand rule of “ doing to others as we would that they should do

to us," as it is with refinement of taste and dignity of character."

"Who would have thought," said little Fanny, "that my happening to bite my tongue this morning, would have led to all this?"

"It would be a fortunate *bite* for you, Fanny," said her mother, "and for your *neighbours*, if it should make you more careful in the use of it. If we were liable to such a misfortune whenever we use our tongues improperly, some persons would be in a constant agony:—now, if our consciences were but half as sensible as our nerves, they would answer the purpose much better.—Foolish talking pains a *good* conscience, just as continual speaking hurts a sore tongue; and if we did but regard one smart as much as the other, it would act as a constant check upon the unruly member."

II.

THE DISCONTENTED PENDULUM.

AN old clock that had stood for fifty years in a farmer's kitchen without giving its owner any cause of complaint, early one summer's morning, before the family was stirring, suddenly stopped.

Upon this, the dial-plate (if we may credit the fable) changed countenance with alarm: the hands made an ineffectual effort to continue their course: the wheels remained motionless with surprise; the weights hung speechless; each member felt disposed to lay the blame on the others. At length the dial instituted a formal inquiry as to the cause of the stagnation; when hands, wheels, weights, with one voice, protested their innocence. But now a faint tick was heard below, from the pendulum, who thus spoke:—

“ I confess myself to be the sole cause of the present stoppage; and am willing, for the general satisfaction, to assign my reasons. The truth is, that I am tired of ticking.” Upon hearing this, the old

clock became so enraged that it was on the point of *striking*.

"Lazy wire!" exclaimed the dial-plate, holding up its hands.

"Very good!" replied the pendulum, "it is vastly easy for you, Mistress Dial, who have always, as every body knows, set yourself up above me—it is vastly easy for you, I say, to accuse other people of laziness! You, who have had nothing to do all the days of your life but to stare people in the face, and to amuse yourself with watching all that goes on in the kitchen! Think, I beseech you, how you would like to be shut up for life in this dark closet, and wag backwards and forwards, year after year, as I do."

"As to that," said the dial, "is there not a window in your house on purpose for you to look through?"

"For all that," resumed the pendulum, "it is very dark here: and although there is a window, I dare not stop, even for an instant, to look out. Besides, I am really weary of my way of life; and if you please, I'll tell you how I took this disgust at my employment. This morning I happened to be calculating how many times I should have to tick in the course only of the next twenty-four hours: perhaps some of you, above there, can give me the exact sum."

The minute hand, being *quick at figures*, instantly replied, "eighty-six thousand, four hundred times."

“ Exactly so,” replied the pendulum: “ well, I appeal to you all, if the thought of this was not enough to fatigue one? and when I began to multiply the strokes of one day by those of months and years, really it is no wonder if I felt discouraged at the prospect: so after a great deal of reasoning and hesitation, thinks I to myself—I’ll stop.”

The dial could scarcely keep its countenance during this harangue; but, resuming its gravity, thus replied:—

“ Dear Mr. Pendulum, I am really astonished that such a useful, industrious person as yourself should have been overcome by this sudden suggestion. It is true you have done a great deal of work in your time. So we have all, and are likely to do; and, although this may fatigue us to *think* of, the question is, whether it will fatigue us to *do*: would you now do me the favour to give about half a dozen strokes, to illustrate my argument?”

The pendulum complied, and ticked six times at its usual pace:—“ Now,” resumed the dial, “ may I be allowed to inquire, if that exertion was at all fatiguing or disagreeable to you?”

“ Not in the least,” replied the pendulum;—“ it is not of six strokes that I complain, nor of sixty, but of *millions*.”

“ Very good,” replied the dial, “ but recollect that although you may *think* of a million strokes in an instant, you are required to *execute* but one;

and that however often you may hereafter have to swing, a moment will always be given you to swing in."

"That consideration staggers me, I confess," said the pendulum.

"Then I hope," resumed the dial-plate, "we shall all immediately return to our duty; for the maids will lie in bed till noon if we stand idling thus."

Upon this, the weights, who had never been accused of *light* conduct, used all their influence in urging him to proceed: when, as with one consent, the wheels began to turn, the hands began to move, the pendulum began to wag, and, to its credit, ticked as loud as ever; while a beam of the rising sun that streamed through a hole in the kitchen shutter, shining full upon the dial-plate, it brightened up as if nothing had been the matter.

When the farmer came down to breakfast that morning, upon looking at the clock he declared that his watch had gained half an hour in the night.

MORAL.

IT is said by a celebrated modern writer, "Take care of the *minutes* and the *hours* will take care of themselves." This is an admirable hint; and might be very seasonably recollected when we begin to be "weary in well doing," from the thought of having a great deal to do. The *present* is all we have to manage: the past is irrecoverable; the future is uncertain; nor is it fair to burden one moment with the weight of the next. Sufficient unto the *moment* is the trouble thereof. If we had to walk a hundred miles, we still need set but one step at a time, and this process continued would infallibly bring us to our journey's end. Fatigue generally begins, and is always increased by calculating in a minute the exertion of hours.

Thus, in looking forward to future life let us recollect ~~that~~ we have not to sustain all its toil, to endure all its sufferings, or to encounter all its crosses at once. One moment comes laden with its own *little* burden, then flies, and is succeeded by another no heavier than the last; if *one* could be sustained, so can another, and another.

Even in looking forward to a single day, the spirit may sometimes faint from an anticipation of the duties, the labours, the trials to temper and patience that may be expected. Now this is unjustly laying the burden of many thousand moments upon *one*. Let any one resolve to do right *now*, leaving *then* to do as it can, and if he were to live to the age of Methuselah, he would never err. But the common error is, to resolve to act right *to-morrow*, or *next time*, but *now*, just *this* once, we must go on the same as ever.

It seems easier to do right to-morrow than to-day, merely because we forget that when to-morrow comes, *then* will be *now*. Thus life passes, with many, in resolutions for the future which the present never fulfils.

It is not thus with those who, "by *patient continuance in well doing*, seek for glory, honour, and immortality:"—day by day, minute by minute, they execute the appointed task to which the requisite measure of time and strength is proportioned: and thus, having worked while it was called day, they at length rest from their labours, and their "works follow them."

Let us then, "whatever our hands find to do, do it with all our might, recollecting, that *now* is the proper and the accepted time."

III.

ROMANS XV. 3.

"For even Christ pleased not himself."

OUR Great Redeemer "left us in all things an example that we should follow his steps." It is therefore an excuse that will avail nothing to say, that he set too perfect a pattern for such erring creatures to copy. They who do not *aim* to copy it are not of his fold. There are many of the Saviour's *actions*, indeed, that it is not very difficult to imitate: we may visit the sick, feed the hungry, instruct the ignorant, and after all, have little or nothing of the mind of Christ. They alone who act from similar *motives*, who, in some humble degree, imbibe his *spirit*, are his true followers; and they only will ever be called his "good and faithful servants."

Now, of all that we read of the character of our Lord, there is no part so rarely or so imperfectly copied as that which the text describes. That Jesus

pleased not himself, is evident throughout his whole course of conduct. Pity for men, and zeal for God, influenced all his actions: and never did he, for a moment, lose sight of either of these objects, in order to consult his own honour or ease. When, after hours of midnight prayer, he lay down to sleep in the vessel that was overtaken with the storm, it was not that he was inattentive to the fears of his disciples, but that he knew it would furnish a fresh occasion of displaying to them his power and goodness in their deliverance. When, "being wearied with his journey he sat on the well," his gracious intention in resting there was, that he might invite the poor woman who came to draw water, to partake of the living streams which he had to bestow. Whether he laboured or rested, fasted, or made one of a feast, he was ever alike intent upon the same objects, influenced by the same motives: "He pleased not himself."

Now, it is only by earnestly imploring the influence of his Spirit, by "abiding in him," that we can hope to imitate him here. The first dictate of our fallen nature is *to please ourselves*, and this too, at the expense of others; that is, of whoever may chance to stand between us and our desires. Young persons cannot be aware (for even old persons are not) of the depths of selfishness that lie undiscovered in the darkness of their hearts. Disinterested actions are indeed talked of; but how few of them can bear

the scrutiny even of human penetration! how few, then, that of Him "who knows what is in man!" We set out from our childhood upon a principle directly opposite to that which the Scripture enjoins. To *please* ourselves is the grand object, even from the baby that snatches the toy from its infant brother, to the man who aims to be richer, or greater, or more esteemed than his neighbour. Through all the stages of life, through all the gradations of society, this self-pleasing is so evident, and is, at the same time, so painfully felt within, by every one acquainted with his own heart, that the whole world seems to present, to the observing eye, one disgraceful *scramble*; every one aiming, at whatever price, to aggrandize, to please—*himself*. For, although good breeding in one rank, good nature in another, and the restraints of law in the lowest, check the open violence of the struggle, yet it is evident enough that the contest is incessantly carried on.

From such a spectacle, how refreshing is it to turn the disgusted eye towards HIM of whom alone it may emphatically be said "he pleased not himself!" And what a consoling consideration it is, that there is a way of escape even to *us*, from this tyranny of the selfish passions: yes, in every age a little company has walked this earth, of those who, although not perfectly freed from the love of self, have yet been delivered from its dominion; they have attained to the unfeigned love of their neighbour; and

their highest ambition has been to have this testimony, that "they pleased GOD."

"Let every one of us," says the apostle, in the verse that introduces the text—"Let every one of us please his neighbour." Who would imagine that such a precept had been sent, with divine authority, to the inhabitants of this world! Had the passage been rendered, "Let every one *tease* his neighbour," surely no precept, divine or human, had ever been so generally obeyed!

"Let every one please his neighbour," instead of pleasing himself!—what a world would this be, if there were any thing approaching to a universal attention to this rule. Let us enumerate a few of the changes that would occur in civilized and christianized society, if such an alteration were to take place. It is too obvious to mention, that crimes which outrage the common laws of the community would then cease; we therefore confine the inquiry to those inconsistencies of conduct which are considered of a less disgraceful kind.

It is evident that, as one immediate consequence of the case we have supposed, there would be an end to all *strife*, public or domestic: no contentions about *my right*, and *yours*: no petty disputings in families, for privilege and preference, if each sought to please the other, and cared not to please himself.

Again: the excess of luxury, and the pride of life, would be no more seen. When persons give

rich entertainments, when they decorate ⁵⁸their houses and their persons to the extent of their means, these things are done to *shew* their neighbours, and to *please themselves*.

Another very happy consequence that would immediately follow, would be the cessation of every description of scandal and evil speaking, from open censoriousness, to the most private gossiping. An ill-natured tale may indeed be told to please one neighbour, but then it must always be at the expense of another: and people please themselves, also, exceedingly, by expatiating on others' faults, because it seems to set off their own virtues. No, not one ill-natured suggestion, not one sarcastic remark, would be uttered, even in the domestic circle, if persons really wished to please their neighbours rather than themselves.

Once more, there would then be no ostentation, no self-seeking in doing good. A person who simply desires his neighbour's benefit, would be as content that another should have the credit of promoting it as himself. We should have *more* work and *less* noise: more business and less bustle. There would then be no more disputes and jealousies, and envyings, and emulation, among Sunday School teachers, about management, and precedence, or whose class is forwardest. Alas! that some of, apparently, the most praise-worthy actions, should be traced to the odious principle of self-

pleasing! Is there not reason to fear that "amongst the instructors of the ignorant, the helpers of the poor; amongst the most conspicuous patrons of benevolent societies, from the highest to the lowest of them; individuals might be found, who are as truly *self-pleasers* as any that could be selected from the haunts of worldly pleasure?

But, in one word, if the supposed change were actually to take place, earth would at once be heaven. Yes; and heaven is *begun* in every heart, in which the process of extirpating the selfish passions is in progress. ~~Such~~ have already, in a measure, "entered into *rest*." That ceaseless disquietude, which agitates the mind of those who are seeking, as their grand object, their own gratification, has subsided; and they possess, according to the degree of their attainment, that *peace* which the Lord left to his followers.

Let us diligently examine our hearts by this test: it is our grand aim and spring of action to please *ourselves*, or to please God, and to fulfil the law of love to our neighbour? Let our good works, as well as our suspicious or bad ones, be brought to the scrutiny; and if our hearts condemn us in this matter, let us very seriously remember, that "if any one have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Those who, through divine grace, have gained any conquest over their self-love, may be stimu-

lated to fresh victories by the great example of Jesus. "Even Christ pleased not himself;" although he had all the springs of pure felicity at his command. He who was "tempted in all points like ourselves;" yet, so far was he from yielding in any instance, that he voluntarily submitted to fatigue, poverty, reproach, and endured inconceivable anguish. "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich."

IV.

FRANCIS'S DREAM.

IN one corner of a dark warehouse, at the back of a dark house, in the midst of a dark street in London, a little apprentice boy one day seated himself upon a bale of dusty goods, and presently fell asleep. Poor Francis (that was his name) was not at this time very happy in his mind. Though, had he known a little more of life, he would have seen much greater reason to be con-

tented with his circumstances than he now did. He had been brought up in the country, perhaps too tenderly, by a very fond mother, a widow ; she died ; and then he was bound apprentice, by the assistance of his relations, to a London tradesman. Francis fancied he was treated with little kindness in his master's family. Perhaps this partly arose from his ignorance of the world, and mistaken ideas of what may reasonably be expected from those we have to do with. It is probable, too, he had never reflected that in the view of mere men of business, *sentiment*, in all its varieties, is the most worthless kind of dead stock that can lay upon one's hands. Being quite unaccustomed to the prompt and brisk dispatch of London business, he felt at first bewildered and discouraged by the smart orders he received, and the strict attention to them that was required ; and he saw no one around him whose counsel he could ask, much less whose sympathy he could invite. For he was but a little boy, and the tall lads and smart young men who brushed past him fifty times in a day, up and down the long shop, took no other notice of Francis than scolding him when they were cross, and laughing at him when they were merry. His mistress was, he thought, a *very* fine lady, but he never saw her more than once a day from the remotest perspective of a long dining table ; and then the tone of voice in which

she used to say, "Do you choose any more, Francis?" did not much encourage him to open his heart to her. As for his master, he was so many removes from him in dignity and office, that very little intercourse passed between them. It was one afternoon, after having been employed all the preceding part of the day in the warehouse, that Francis, fatigued and melancholy, fell asleep, as before related. Joy and hope keep youthful eyelids open: but the dispirited yield readily to sleep.

Francis's dream, in the early part of it, was (like dreams in general) too indistinct and unconnected to be at all worthy of record: but it gradually became more rational; and as well as he can remember, it was to this effect. — He thought that he rose to leave the warehouse; but upon entering the long passage that led to the front of the house, it appeared so unusually dark that he shrunk back, and would have returned, but something compelled him to proceed. At every step he thought the darkness increased, and the passage became so extremely narrow that he could with difficulty creep along upon his hands and knees. It was also exceedingly cold, and Francis experienced a horror altogether indescribable. The passage too seemed to lengthen as he proceeded, and he began to despair of reaching the end, when a dim and distant light suddenly

discovered it to him. As he advanced, he found that the light proceeded from the crevices of the door at the end of the passage: and it now seemed as if the apartment within must be illumed with something brighter than sun beams. When at length he reached the door, he perceived that it was fastened with bars of massy iron, and exhausted as he was, he despaired of being able to force it open; but to his great and joyful surprise, it gently unfolded itself and he entered. And now, instead of the dull apartment he was accustomed to see, he found himself at the extremity of a widely extended lawn, from which arose a spacious and magnificent palace. Noble avenues, spicy groves, beds of flowers, and bowers of roses, cooling rivulets, and sparkling cascades, all shining beneath a cloudless sky, presented themselves to his delighted view. While he was gazing on this agreeable scene, several persons of extraordinary grace and beauty, respectfully approached him, and with smiles of complacency informed him that he was the sole proprietor of this fine estate. Whereupon they conducted him to the interior of the palace, which appeared furnished with every thing to gratify his utmost wishes; and where he found himself surrounded with a chosen circle of intelligent and affectionate friends, who vied with each other in promoting his rare felicity. But there was something besides all this, which it is impossible for

language to express. Over the scenery of a pleasing dream there is spread a rich glow of colouring, an air of enchantment, so unlike the tints and aspect of this world, that they seem as if designed on purpose to form a contrast with the dulness of the brightest reality. Dreams represent things present, as hope does the future, and memory the past. Such Francis now beheld: it was enchanted ground; surpassing even the visions of youthful fancy. The radiant sunshine, the richness of the extended prospect, the hills of pearl and gold that glowed in the distance, the oriental magnificence of the palace—above all, the refined and romantic intercourse he enjoyed with his companions, excited in his bosom thrills of indescribable ecstasy. A milk white steed, richly caparisoned, was now led up by a train of servants, on which he was about to survey the distant parts of his estate: but which, in the tantalizing spirit of a dream, he made repeated and ineffectual efforts to mount: with his foot on the stirrup, and no visible impediment, something constantly retarded him as often as he endeavoured to rise:—at length, just as he was resolving to give one effectual spring—the rattling of a mail coach that drove furiously through the narrow street, with the piercing notes of the guard's horn, suddenly awaked him, and it being now dark, the lamps flashing as they passed on the ceiling and lumber of the warehouse, perfectly re-

stored him to his recollection. Who has not experienced the blankness of awaking from a dream of ecstasy to the dull reality of present circumstances? No wonder that Francis returned to his employments with a deeper feeling of the joylessness of his situation. For several days the impression of his dream remained so strongly on his imagination, that he began to think it must be interpreted in favour of his future fortune.

There was an old porter, called Stephen, much esteemed for his sobriety and fidelity, who had served many years in this business. His good-natured look and obliging manner, often attracted the attention of Francis: and happening one day soon after this, to be sent to him on some business in the cellars, where Stephen was generally employed, he entered into conversation with him: and in hopes of a flattering interpretation, presently related his dream.

“ Well, master Francis,” said the old porter, when he had finished, “ there is nothing in all this but what you may one day come to, if you do but go the right way to work for it.”

“ Indeed! are you in earnest?” said Francis, “ ah! I suppose you think I have rich relations; but do you know, my old friend (for I don’t mind speaking to you, because you look good-natured) that though I am apprenticed to this great business, I am but a poor boy; for I have no father, nor

mother either, now ; nor any fortune of my own, so that it is very unlikely, is it not, that I should ever come to a fine estate ?”

“ Not more unlikely than that *I* should,” replied the porter, “ and do you know, young master, I have good expectations of as great things, and greater too, than any you saw in your dream.”

Here Francis expressed his surprise ; and with a look of incredulity requested an explanation. Whereupon the old porter said that if he would not believe him, he would shew him the title deeds of his estate ; and reaching an old brown book from a shelf where he always kept it, and putting on his spectacles, he presently pointed Francis to a part which he desired him to read. The words were these : “ In my Father’s house are many mansions ; I go to prepare a place for you.”

“ Dear !” said Francis, that is only a text in the Bible ; do you think I never read that before ? You are joking with me, I fancy.”

“ Oh no, my dear, I am quite serious,” said the porter, “ and if you will have patience to hear me, I’ll tell you what I mean. I was but a lad, very little older than you are, when it pleased God to convince me that if I should gain the whole world and lose my soul, it would profit me nothing :—I saw that it would be the most imprudent, dangerous and desperate conduct to enjoy any peace in this world, till I had a good hope of being happy to all

eternity. And I wondered much (and so I do still) that all reasonable persons did not think the same. So after suffering a great deal of pain and trouble of mind, I was at last convinced that as the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and as he commands every one who hears of it to believe this and be saved, that I, a poor unworthy lad as I was, might come to him, and that he would not cast me out. So I believed that he would save me from my sins, and that he would give me, *yes even to me*, everlasting life. O! it is a wonderful thing! but as God has promised it, who am I that I should dare to doubt it? Well Sir, from that time to this I have gone on my way rejoicing. It is true I have had to work hard, and sometimes to fare hard, year after year; and as to the great things of this world, I have had nothing to do with them; but then, I often think to myself, when I am at work in this cellar, and hear the chariots rolling away in the street above, what does that signify? It is but waiting a few years, and, if I do but persevere in the good ways of God, what great things will be mine! Why Sir, God himself hath assured us that there is nothing in this world to be compared with what is preparing for them that love him. Think what one of these mansions will be, that Jesus is gone to make ready: and, to refer to the similitude of your dream, there is but one dark and cold passage to pass before I enter on my heavenly inheritance. O, master

Francis, never be fretting yourself because you are not likely to come to such a fine estate in this world, as that you saw in your dream; but rejoice to think that there is something beyond all compare better, God will give you if you do but ask him for it: and forasmuch as there was that, so rare and beautiful in the things you beheld, as you can in no wise express; so, it seems to me to set forth something of that glory of which the Scripture saith that 'eye hath not seen it, nor ear heard, neither can the heart of man conceive thereof.' "

Now, as Francis had not been in the habit of hearing much on the subject of religion, he was the more struck with this discourse of the old porter. Especially he noticed the lively joy that he manifested in his look and manner, at the prospect of future happiness. For it was not mere *talk* with this good man: he really felt the unspeakable joy arising from a good hope of soon being in heaven. And he was most sincere in saying, that he accounted all the good and great things of this world as less than nothing in comparison of "an *eternal weight of glory*:" and O, how strange, that every one is not of his opinion!

Francis and his old friend had many conversations after this on the same subject. Well would it be if such refined and high discourse were more frequently held in splendid drawing rooms as that which often passed in the dark cellar. The result

appeared to be unspeakably advantageous to young Francis. His mind was relieved of a weight of anxiety, and his spirits rose above their depression, as soon as he began to perceive that his real and ultimate happiness did not in the least depend on his condition in this world, or on any of its contingencies. He reflected with sensations of almost overwhelming delight, that boundless, endless, and even present felicity, was freely offered to his choice in the good news of the gospel. And as (most happily for him) he had no "great possessions," to distract his choice, he did not "turn away sorrowful," but joyfully, thankfully, accepted of LIFE and HAPPINESS. Thus, without fortune, without friends, without any of those things which are sought after with such unceasing avidity by the men, and women, and children of this world, and to the attainment of which such tremendous sacrifices are made, this happy young person found himself possessed of all wealth in the unsearchable riches of Christ.

V.

COUSIN'S VISIT.

MRS. NEWTON had two daughters, named Susan and Maria: they lived a retired life in the country; and as they seldom saw company, they were both exceedingly delighted one morning at breakfast, when their mother read them part of a letter she had just received from her niece, Miss Newton, in London, saying, that she intended to come and pass a month with them very shortly.

Susan and Maria were girls of thirteen and fourteen years of age; but their cousin was grown up. They had never seen her, but they had often heard their mamma say, that she was a very amiable and sensible young woman, therefore they were very impatient for her coming, and, indeed, thought of little besides from this time to that of her arrival.

Susan Newton was a gentle, affectionate girl; her manners were refined, and her temper sweet and obliging. Maria was lively and talkative; she liked

very much to be noticed by strangers ; and she had a foolish idea that whatever she said or did before others, they were observing her and thinking of her ;—a mistake which always arises from persons' thinking too much of themselves. Maria was also very apt to feel jealous of her sister, having a great desire that people should love her the best :—and the very first thought that sprung up in her little selfish heart, when she heard of her cousin's coming, was, that she hoped she would love her better than her sister. Such thoughts look very frightful set down in black and white ; and yet they do not appear at all more so than they really are when concealed from every eye in some dark crevice of the heart. Maria accordingly began, from that instant, contriving what she could do to ingratiate herself in her cousin's favour ; and worse than that, how she could make herself appear more amiable and agreeable than Susan ; whereas Susan, in the simplicity of her heart, thought only of the pleasure she should enjoy in her cousin's company.

On the day appointed, Mrs. Newton set off in the little pony-chaise which she kept, to meet her niece at the neighbouring town ; for the stage coach did not come within five miles of their retired village. Susan and Maria remained at home ; and before their mother could well have reached the town to which she was going, their impatience made them imagine it was time for her to return. Accordingly

they placed themselves in the bow window that looked towards the road, in order that they might catch the first glimpse of the chaise. Susan, indeed, was wise enough to take her work, so that the time did not seem so extremely tedious to her as it did to Maria, who expressed her uneasiness from time to time, by exclaiming, "What a while they are!"—"I begin to be afraid that cousin is not come!"—"How I wish they would come!"—and the like. Every gig, cart, waggon, or wheelbarrow that was heard at a distance, Maria felt sure was *it*. But Susan wisely suspended her opinion till they came within sight. At last—that is, just about the time that might have been expected—the grey pony made its appearance, and presently stopped, with their guest, before the gate. Maria, by this time, had wrought herself into such an agitation, that her cheeks were all in crimson glow; and she made two or three blunders in the sentence which she had prepared for the first greeting. So that Susan, who had made no preparation at all, and only said, "How d'ye do, cousin?" appeared on this occasion to the most advantage. Miss Newton kissed them both affectionately; but not being in good health she was greatly fatigued by her journey, and could not therefore take much notice of either of them that evening. Maria remarked several times, "how *very* sorry she was her cousin was so poorly." But Susan, who perceived it was fatiguing to her

to reply, said nothing about it; only she set a foot-stool for her to rest her feet upon, and gently placed one of the sofa pillows at the back of her chair; and when she smiled and said, "Thank you love," Maria wished *she* had thought of it, and said, "Ah, that is right; I am sure cousin must want something to lean upon. How I do hope she will be better to-morrow."

'She was better the next day; and soon rendered herself so agreeable to the young folks, by her amiable manners and intelligent conversation, that they were both delighted with their relation. Susan soon felt a tender affection for her, and Maria an increased desire to win her regard. For this purpose, she employed several means which proved her to be very unskilful in the culture of true affection. For instance, she would go to her cousin several times in a day, and throwing her arms round her neck, kiss her repeatedly, till it became really troublesome: then she would say, "Dear cousin, how I love you! I don't think you know half how much I love you;" and other things of the same kind:—things which are all very well, occasionally, when they are the genuine and spontaneous expressions of affection; but when employed as mere professions to gain favour, which is oftener the case, they are exceedingly troublesome and disagreeable.

Susan's love was expressed in a different way. She shewed her respect for her cousin by listening

attentively to her conversation ; and her affection, chiefly by thinking of, and doing *little things*, which she thought might promote her comfort or convenience. Maria, indeed, was very officious in waiting upon her ; but as her object in so doing was not so much to accommodate her cousin as to shew her own attentions, she often made mistakes, and gave more trouble than she rendered service. She had also a very unpleasant way of saying flattering things, which always means, that persons wish to be flattered in return. " Dear cousin," she would say, " how I do admire the colour of your hair?"—or " how sweetly cousin sings!"—or, " how I do wish I could write such a nice hand as cousin!" But Susan very properly thought, it would be a liberty in a girl of her age to make such remarks ; she was content to make them to herself, and to endeavour to imitate her cousin's excellencies.

During the whole time of Miss Newton's visit, Maria was so anxious to be in her company, that she neglected her usual business, and did not apply properly to any thing ; while Susan went regularly about her usual studies ; and besides that, knowing that her mamma wished to enjoy as much of her niece's company as possible, she undertook many little domestic offices that she was unaccustomed to, in order that her mother might have the more leisure. Thus she was often absent from the parlour for a long time ; at which Maria secretly both

rejoiced and wondered ; for she considered that her sister's absence afforded her a capital opportunity of recommending herself. Very often she would remain in the room, or follow her mother and cousin about the garden, when they would both rather have dispensed with her company, that they might have some private conversation. Thus it is that forward, *pushing* persons ever defeat their own purposes. It was particularly observable, that Susan's assiduities were not confined to an individual whom she wished to please : her mother, her sister, and every one who needed them, were attended to, with as much alacrity, as her cousin ; while Maria neglected every body else, in order to lavish her attentions and services upon one.

Now Miss Newton was too observant a person not to remark all this ; and before she had passed one week in this family, any impartial by-stander would have seen for which of these girls she felt the most esteem. But poor Maria was so blinded by self-love, that she could not persuade herself but that, in return for all her lavish professions of regard, so far surpassing those of her sister, she must give preference to herself : still she wished for some unequivocal assurance of this preference ; and the day before Miss Newton was to take her departure, being alone with her in the garden, she endeavoured to introduce the subject. Finding, however, that no distant, nor even broad hint would be taken, she said, at length,

"Dear cousin, there is one question I should so like to ask you?"

COUSIN. Well, if it is a proper question, ask it.

MARIA. I don't know whether you will think it a proper question quite; but I feel so anxious about it that I must tell you:—it is, that I should so very much like to know, for a particular reason, which you like best, Susan or me?

COUSIN. I must first tell you, that I do not think that a proper question; and I advise you to drop it at once; however, I shall give you your choice; if you still desire it, I will answer it; but observe, I advise you not.

MARIA. Ah! well do answer it, however.

COUSIN. Well, then, I love Susan the best.

Maria looked up, to see if she was serious; and expecting some satisfactory explanation, she repeated, "Susan!"

COUSIN. Yes, Susan.

Hereupon Maria hastily withdrawing her arm from her cousin's, hid her face in her hands, and burst into a passionate fit of weeping: she cried violently, a long time, expecting at every fresh burst, that her cousin would say something consolatory:—instead of which, she only walked quietly by her side, without uttering a word.

At last, in a sullen and broken voice, Maria began—"Well it is hard, after all that I have felt; I little thought of this;—it is hard—it is very——."

COUSIN. It is no fault of mine, my dear; did not I advise you not to put the question?

MARIA. Ah, but I mean it is hard that you should—that you should not love me as well, at least—Oh! oh! oh! (sobbing.)

COUSIN. But that is not my fault either; I cannot help it.

Here Maria wept more violently than before.

COUSIN. My dear, I am very sorry to have hurt you; but you know I was obliged to tell the truth. There is not time now to enter further upon the subject; but I promise that when I return home, I will write you a long letter, and explain to you why I love Susan the best. In the mean time, I must say, that I do love you, Maria, though not quite so well as I hope to do when we meet again.

Maria was a little comforted by this assurance, and by the promise of a letter from her cousin, which (unless any thing unforeseen prevents) she intends her to receive on the first of March.

VI.

COUSIN'S LETTER.

My dear Maria,

ALTHOUGH I should be sorry to lose the regard which you have kindly expressed towards me, I have determined, in fulfilling my late promise, to put aside all selfish considerations, and at the hazard of being thought unkind and ungrateful, to give you my thoughts very faithfully. To prevent all disappointment, therefore, I think it best to apprise you at the outset, that this letter will not contain a single compliment; nor any consolatory explanation of my answer to your question; for this would be doing you a real injury for the sake of a little present comfort. It is, on the contrary, my intention, as far as my observation extends, and as far as the difference in our ages may warrant, to speak more in the character of your conscience, than of your cousin.

It is of little consequence, my dear, whether a solitary individual (with whom you will probably have little future intercourse) it is of very little con-

sequence, whether, or in what degree I may esteem and love you: but it is of great consequence, to yourself, that you should become worthy of esteem and affection; and therefore I shall not, to save myself and you a little present pain, withhold any observation that may tend to your future and permanent advantage.

I promised to tell you why I love Susan the best; and I can do this in a very few words. It is because she appears to me to be more amiable than you. It may be, that you will not consider this a sufficient reason; supposing, that in return for the many obliging things you said and did for me I ought to feel an equal or superior degree of regard for you. But this would arise from a great yet common mistake as to the nature of affection; as though it were a thing as voluntary in its exercise, as much in our power to give and to withhold, as money or service. There is nothing more unreasonable than to accuse persons of ingratitude for not loving us so much as we desire. Yet instances of this may be frequently observed. Most people feel the wish of being beloved: and in order to obtain their object it often happens that persons of selfish dispositions, of harsh, morose and tyrannical tempers, feeling the desolateness of living without affection, endeavour by large benefactions, and a succession of costly favours, to bribe the love of some individual. Not considering, that half the

pains taken to subdue an evil temper, one real sacrifice of their own will or convenience for the other's happiness, would do more towards inspiring true affection than thousands of gold and silver. In such a case, gratitude requires the obliged party to shew all due respect and to do all the service in his power : but it cannot require what is out of his power—that is, to love an unamiable person.

There is indeed a great deal of ingratitude, and a great deal of injustice and misapprehension in the world ; and yet, love is a thing so discriminating, so free in its choice, so incapable of purchase, bribe, or bondage, that I believe it is very rarely, if ever *permanently* misplaced ; or *finally* withheld where it is really merited. True affection as naturally flows towards the excellent and amiable, and as naturally avoids the mean, the selfish, the ill-natured, as water, escaping from the harsh and rugged rock, rests not till it reposes in the flowery bosom of the valley. We do, indeed, sometimes see ill-judging people lavishing their admiration on persons of superficial virtues and great professions ; but in the sequel even these will be compelled to own their mistake, and acknowledge the superior worth of the modest, unpretending, consistent, benevolent character.

If I were about to make choice of a particular friend among a number of persons, I should not be guided by their conduct and professions to me, but

by their behaviour in their own families and amongst their old friends. A person who sustains one relation well, will not fail in another. I should be quite sure that a dutiful, affectionate, attentive daughter—a kind, disinterested, and self-denying sister, would make a *good friend*: and, on the contrary, no attentions or professions to myself could induce me to believe, that an individual who failed in these relations was capable of disinterested and faithful friendship. I should fully expect, that as soon as the novelty of our intimacy was worn off, the first time our interest or convenience happened to clash, I should experience the same want of kindness and generosity as I had witnessed in the case of others.

Now, to come as much to the point as I promised, I will plainly say, that, from what I observed in my two cousins, I should expect that Susan's friendship, though not so warmly expressed, would prove of the most durable and sterling quality. If I had remained with you some time longer, so as to become one of the family, and until the interest young people naturally feel in strangers had passed off, I could reasonably have expected no other conduct from you than that which your mother and sister commonly receive. I am sure, at least, that I should not wish to be distinguished from them in such a way. Suppose then, that after a while, I had been taken very ill, as I sometimes am, and had required a great deal of troublesome attendance ;

which, think you, of my cousins would have been the most attentive nurse? I do not ask who would have expressed most concern at my indisposition; but who would have been most willing to absent herself from agreeable company below, to watch in the sick chamber? Who would have been most mindful of my *little* wants, and most thoughtful and active in rendering those services which make no show, and are too minute for thanks or observation?

I think also that you are too anxious to obtain the love and admiration of those you meet with; or rather, I mean, that your anxiety is not of the right kind; but differs essentially from the natural, honest, and wholesome desire for the esteem and affection of our friends. The spurious kind may be known by its *activity*, and by the *bye ways* it takes to accomplish its purpose. *Jealousy* is another sure characteristic of this undue concern for the regard of others. Now, would you not consider it very unjust, very mean, and, more than that, very dishonest, if your sister should endeavour to persuade your mother to diminish your annual allowance in order to increase hers? or if she were to use means to induce her to bequeath to herself the largest share of her property? But is it not equally ungenerous and unjust to desire a monopoly of *affection*, which is a thing more precious than gold? Why should you not wish Susan to share, at least equally with you, in what you yourself consider so very valuable?

There is one comprehensive virtue which, more than any other that I can think of, characterizes those who enjoy universal esteem : this is *humility* : while those persons who imagine that their qualities entitle them to general regard, never—never attain it. Your gentle sister, appears to me to shine in this grace. She thinks so little of herself and of her own deservings, that whatever she receives of approbation and regard from others, seems to her wholly gratuitous. Now, as we always prefer giving where least is demanded, it is not surprising that our love should flow most readily where it is not claimed.

There is, my dear cousin (and I say it more from what I have detected in my own heart, than from any observation I have made on others) there is a kind of devoted attachment to some favourite friend, accompanied with an eager desire for their affection in return, which is purely selfish ; and entirely distinct from a rational, well-founded, generous friendship. The esteem of that friend flatters our vanity ; her attentions and confidence exalt us in the eyes of others : for such a friend we may, indeed, do much, and make some costly sacrifices, but which, after all, are laid on the altar of self-love.

Many of the mean dispositions and uncharitable tempers which spring up in the human heart, would be at least checked in their growth if their noxious qualities had been early perceived. But the trouble and mortification of minute investigation and strict

scrutiny are so great, that few take the pains requisite for the purpose; and many scarcely know how to set about it. Thus we deceive ourselves, and call things by their wrong names; so that the grossest vanity will pass for humbleness of mind; and the deepest selfishness for a warm and affectionate disposition.

Let me then advise my cousin, while she is still young, and all things are possible, to enter into a close and faithful examination of her own heart. Let her *motives* undergo the strictest scrutiny; and never let her set the least value on that regard (even if it could be secured) which is not founded on *sterling qualities*. There is a thing more precious and more conducive to happiness than the esteem of others, and that is *self-esteem*. When this is acquired the other will be sure to follow: resolve then to *deserve* the affection of your friends; and in order to this, think much less of what particular persons may think of you and of your conduct. Let it be your endeavour, from benevolent motives instead of for selfish ends, to promote the happiness of all around you; cultivate habits of activity, of self-denial. Learn humility: be content to take your proper level: *think less, much less of yourself*, and make fewer demands on others: and then, what you before unsuccessfully claimed will be spontaneously yielded.

If I had not believed you to be possessed of good

sense and principle enough to profit by these suggestions, I should not have taken the trouble to address them to you. If you will believe it, my dear Maria, I have given you a very strong proof of friendship in this letter; for it requires a greater effort to give one *faithful* reproof than to pay a hundred elaborate compliments; and it is, be assured, a far stronger evidence of affection.—My hope—I will even say my *expectation* is, that if a few years hence I should be favoured to pay another visit to my cousins, it would perplex me exceedingly to answer such a question as that to which you lately compelled me to reply, but which, you would, in that case, feel no inclination to propose. In the mean time, I remain your sincere friend and affectionate cousin,

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P. S. Your mother and sister will not expect to see this letter, as they are already informed that it relates to private business between you and me.

VII.

MATTHEW XI. 30.

" My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Is it not very strange and inconsistent for those who profess to believe that every word of God is true, to feel a doubt concerning any plain assertion of the Scriptures. Yet much of this unbelief prevails with respect to particular statements in the Bible. The reluctance which those persons betray towards religion who are but "almost persuaded to be Christians," and who go on from year to year hesitating and undecided, must arise from an inward disbelief of the declaration in the text. Persons who are worldly in their spirit, and who are much engrossed by the business or the pleasures of life, cannot be persuaded that the yoke of Christ is really easy, nor that his burden is literally light. They imagine that, after all religion demands sacrifices that are very costly, and requires duties that are exceedingly burdensome, so that they shrink from it, and delay, hoping that a time will come,

when they shall be better able and more willing to perform its hard conditions. Thus they tacitly deny the direct and absolute assertion of our Lord himself.

Young persons are especially exposed to this inconsistency ; for, not having long worn the galling yoke of the world, nor felt the weight of that burden which it imposes, they are not easily persuaded to relinquish them, nor to make trial of others, however highly recommended.

Some of the truths contained in the Bible are, from their nature, incapable of demonstration : we believe them simply because God has declared them. But there are others which are corroborated by reflection and daily experience : and this, in the text, is one of the number. If Christ had never said it, yet all true Christians would have known with equal certainty, that his yoke is easy : and impartial reflection would enable those who have never yet worn it, to acquiesce in the truth of the assertion.

The only yoke that our Lord imposes on his disciples, is that of "keeping his commandments:" and "his commandments are not grievous." No, for they do but lay restraints on those tempers and passions, the indulgence of which makes us miserable : and they only require the fulfilment of those duties, in the exercise of which true happiness consists. It is far from being the case (as many suppose) that the only advantage of wearing this

yoke, is its being the condition of our future safety :—for it is the pleasantest companion we can have in our pilgrimage : nor is there any burden so light as that which those carry who are travelling to heaven.

To illustrate this, let the case be supposed of a young person possessed of all those things that are considered most desirable in this world:—of health, beauty, friends, affluence;—the ability to gratify every wish, and facilities in the pursuit of every new desire:—and then let us inquire what sacrifices a consistent profession of religion would require of such an individual; and what influence such sacrifices would have on his true happiness. And since it is too evident to require argument that a life of open immorality, and a series of worldly dissipation produce weariness, disappointment and misery, we shall rather suppose the party in question to have been accustomed to the restraints of a religious education; and to be sober, regular, and reputable in his habits and deportment: so that the change would rather affect the temper of the mind, than make any very sensible alteration in the external conduct.

Should such an individual begin in earnest to “think upon his ways, and turn to the Lord,” the first witness to the change would be the closet. There, instead of an occasional and formal service,

wearisome in the performance, and leaving a pained and dissatisfied conscience—would be heard the cry of the contrite, the sincere, the importunate request; or the groan too deep for utterance. It is true, this implies more effort, more difficulty: but is this yoke to be compared with the burdensome formality of heartless prayer? Is the constrained language of compliment more easy and agreeable than the expression of genuine feeling? Is it not easier to ask, however importunately, for things we really desire, than to make insincere requests for favours we do not value? Yes, though genuine prayer is arduous, it is not burdensome: it is service, but not slavery; duty, but not drudgery: and instead of bringing fresh guilt upon the conscience, an interest in all the promises of the gospel is its sure reward.

The same comparison might be made as to the performance of all devotional services. To read a chapter as a daily task, or to search the Scriptures as for "hidden treasure, knowing that in them are the words of eternal life;" to listen to certain passages with an ear wearied by their frequent repetition, or to attend to them as "exceeding great and precious promises," in which we are personally concerned—who, in such a case wears the painful yoke, and bears the heavier burden? And which is pleasanter—to go to the house of God hungering and thirsting for the bread and water of life, or to tread

the accustomed path with lifeless unconcern, and to count with listless weariness the tedious minutes of the service.

But here it might be objected by the person supposed (at least if he would choose to speak on such a subject with entire unreserve) that many heavy sacrifices must be made in order to attend upon public services in a proper spirit. A crowded assembly—perhaps, alas! a *showy* assembly, where friends and acquaintances rendezvous, and where strangers are incessantly inviting curiosity, affords much *amusement*, amusement which it might seem extremely difficult, and more unpleasant to relinquish. To suppress vain thoughts, and to restrain the wandering eye, to forego every unhallowed indulgence, to check frivolous conversation afterwards, and instead of all this, to go with a prepared heart, to maintain a serious deportment; to engage spiritually in the service, and to keep the eye, the tongue, the heart, with all diligence during the Sabbath—where is the lightness of this burden, the ease of such a yoke? It is here;—the conscience would be sweetly relieved from that grievous and galling weight which must, more or less, oppress the minds of those who know they are not serving God in spirit and in truth. Perhaps in case of illness or alarm there is nothing which lies more heavily on the heart of such persons, than the recollection of lost and violated Sabbaths. And, to ascend to more elevated considera-

tions, can it be seriously imagined that the poor, disappointing, and disquieting diversions of a light and unholy mind, can be compared with the satisfaction and joy of "seeing the beauty of the Lord, and inquiring for salvation in his temple?" "But, alas!" replies the sorrowful objector, "Although I know it would be eventually better for me to be religious in earnest, I cannot yet make the surrender. I have so *much* to give up: every thing, indeed, that is most dear to me. I would fast and pray, and submit to painful penances, if that would suffice; but how can I tear myself from those very things that make life agreeable to me? Could I become indifferent to admiration?—the very food which sustains my happiness.—Could I resign things that are inexpressively dear and interesting? I might indeed cut off a right hand, and pluck out a right eye, but how could I sacrifice the whole of my earthly enjoyment?"

And is it, then, the case that the yoke of Christ implies such a sacrifice? or does it not rather rectify the mistakes we make respecting the nature of happiness, and purify the vitiated taste which enables us to relish unsanctified pleasures? The Saviour says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you:" and he adds that, "they who resign all for him shall receive manifold more in this present life." And how strikingly do we sometimes see this promise

fulfilled. . Persons who have made an early and a complete surrender of their bodies and spirits to the Lord, are not unfrequently *distinguished* by his providential favours from those who have shrunk from the sacrifice. And what is the sacrifice? Not the common comforts of life; not the endearing relations of society; not the enjoyments of rational intercourse; not the pleasures of taste or the pursuits of knowledge. No surrender of these, wisely and moderately used, is now generally required. For these are not the days in which the disciples of the Lord are honoured with such high tests of their fidelity and love as distinguished the Christians of other times. With respect to all these lawful comforts, the wise and merciful commands of our Saviour impose those restraints only which are necessary to the true enjoyment of them;—which are essential to our welfare, and to all that is amiable, sterling, and dignified in the character. It is true, that vanity must be subdued; but does not the indulgence of it render us contemptible in the eyes of others; and is it not a ceaseless source of disquietude and mortification to ourselves? How peaceful is that breast that is freed from its emotions! How respectable the character that rises superior to its low artifices and mean desires! How easy then, and necessary is the yoke which religion imposes in these respects.

But how much difficulty is implied, it may be said, in the command “to love our neighbour as

ourselves, and to do to others as we would they should do to us." Who is sufficient for this in its full and spiritual extent! What! to forego every selfish action, to quench every uncharitable thought, to suppress the ill-natured conjecture, to withhold the smart satire, to rejoice in the prosperity of a rival, to sympathize in the success of a competitor; what unremitting watchfulness, what difficult self-denial must this require! But then, consider how much would be gained by the suppression of those selfish and disquieting passions which reign, and often rage in the unsubdued mind. What peace and tranquillity are possessed by the consistent self-denying Christian! he is, in a manner, invulnerable in a thousand points where others are incessantly wounded. He escapes the bitter mortifications, the sharp retaliations, the disappointments and chagrins which incessantly disturb their repose. While he enjoys the esteem and love of society; peace in his conscience; and the hope of an eternal reward.

But love to God and to our neighbour includes also, activity in their service. "And is this a light burden?" it may be asked by the indolent and pleasure-loving spectator of the diligent exertions of others.—"Is it easy and pleasant to devote all the intervals of Sabbath services to the drudgery of teaching? Is it agreeable to visit hovels and prisons—the disgusting abodes of disease and wretchedness?" Let the serenity, the cheerfulness, the

happiness, that beam in the countenances of those who are most eminently distinguished by these exertions, answer the question. And let them at the same time be contrasted with the lassitude, the discontent, the uneasiness and restlessness, visible in those who have long made their own ease and gratification the chief object of their pursuit in life.

The point in debate has been here argued on the low ground of self-interest, in order to meet the reasonings of those who are not sensible to higher motives. But let us, in conclusion, hear the language of experienced and exalted piety:—"There are many that say, who will shew us any good: Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us, and it shall put more gladness in our hearts, than in the time when their corn and their wine and their oil increased."

VIII.

BUSY IDLENESS.

MRS. DAWSON being obliged to leave home for six weeks, her daughters, Charlotte and Caroline, received permission to employ the time of her absence as they pleased: that is, she did not require of them the usual strict attention to particular hours, and particular studies, but allowed them to choose their own employments; only recommending them to make a good use of the licence, and apprizing them, that, on her return, she should require an exact account of the manner in which the interval had been employed.

The carriage that conveyed their mother away was scarcely out of hearing, when Charlotte, delighted with her freedom, hastened up stairs, to the school room, where she looked around on books, globes, maps, drawings, to select some *new* employment for the morning. Long before she had

decided upon any, her sister had quietly seated herself at her accustomed station, thinking that she could do nothing better than finish the French exercise she had begun the day before. Charlotte, however, declined attending to French that day, and, after much indecision, and saying, "I have a great mind to"—three several times without finishing the sentence, she at last took down a volume of Cowper, and read in different parts for about half an hour; then, throwing it aside, she said she had a great mind to put the book shelves in order—a business which she commenced with great spirit; but in the course of her laudable undertaking, she met with a manuscript in short-hand: whereupon she exclaimed to her sister, "Caroline, don't you remember that old Mr. Henderson once promised he would teach us short-hand?—How much I should like to learn!—Only mamma thought we had not time;—but now, this would be such a good opportunity.—I am sure I could learn it well in six weeks; and how convenient it would be!—One could take down sermons, or any thing, and I could make Rachel learn, and then how *very* pleasant it would be to write to each other in short-hand! Indeed, it would be convenient in a hundred ways."—So saying, she ran up stairs, without any further delay, and putting on her hat and spencer, set off to old Mr. Henderson's.

Mr. Henderson happened to be at dinner; never-

theless Charlotte obtained admittance on the plea of urgent business; but she entered his apartment so much out of breath, and in such apparent agitation, that the old gentleman rising hastily from table, and looking anxiously at her over his spectacles, inquired in a tremulous tone, what was the matter. When, therefore, Charlotte explained her business, he appeared a little disconcerted; but having gently reproved her for her undue eagerness, he composedly resumed his knife and fork, though his hand shook much more than usual during the remainder of his meal. However, being very good-natured, as soon as he had dined, he cheerfully gave Charlotte her first lesson in short-hand, promising to repeat it regularly every morning.

Charlotte returned home in high glee: she at this juncture considered short-hand as one of the most useful, and decidedly the most interesting of acquirements; and she continued to exercise herself in it all the rest of the day. She was exceedingly pleased at being able already to write two or three words which neither her sister nor even her father could decypher. For three successive mornings, Charlotte punctually kept her appointment with Mr. Henderson; but on the fourth, she sent a shabby excuse to her kind master; and, if the truth must be told, he from that time saw no more of his scholar. Now the cause of this desertion was two-fold: first, and principally, her zeal for short-hand, which for

the last, eight and forty hours had been sensibly declining in its temperature, was on the above morning, within half a degree of freezing point; and besides this, a new and far more arduous and important undertaking had by this time suggested itself to her mind. Like many young persons of desultory inclinations, Charlotte often amused herself with writing verses; and it now occurred to her, that *an abridged history of England in verse*, was still a *desideratum* in literature. She commenced this task with her usual diligence; but was somewhat discouraged in the outset by the difficulty of finding a rhyme to *Saxon*, whom, she indulged the unpatriotic wish, that the Danes had laid a *tax on*. But though she got over this obstacle by a new construction of the line, she found these difficulties occur so continually, that she soon felt a more thorough disgust at this employment than at the preceding one; so the epic stopped short, some hundred years before the Norman conquest. *Difficulty*, which quickens the ardour of industry, always damps, and generally extinguishes the false zeal of caprice and versatility.

Charlotte's next undertaking was, to be sure, a rapid descent from the last in the scale of dignity. She now thought, that by working very hard during the remainder of the time, she should be able to accomplish a patch-work counterpane, large enough

for her own little tent bed; and the ease of this employment formed a most agreeable contrast in her mind with the extreme difficulty of the last. Accordingly, as if commissioned with a search-warrant, she ransacked all her mother's drawers, bags, and bundles in quest of new pieces; and these spoils proving very insufficient, she set off to tax all her friends, and to tease all the linen-draper in the town for their *odds and ends*; urging that she wanted some *particularly*. As she was posting along the street on this business, she espied at a distance a person whom she had no wish to encounter, namely, old Mr. Henderson. To avoid the meeting she crossed over; but this manœuvre did not succeed; for no sooner had they come opposite to each other, than, to her great confusion, he called out all across the street, in his loud and tremulous voice, and shaking his stick at her, "How d'ye do *Miss Shorthand*? I thought how it would be! O fie! O fie!"

Charlotte hurried on: and her thoughts soon returned to the idea of the splendid radiating star which she designed for the centre-piece of her counterpane. While she was arranging the different patterns, and forming the alterations of light and shade, her interest continued nearly unabated; but when she came to the *practical* part, of sewing piece to piece with unvarying sameness, it began, as

usual, to flag. She sighed several times, and cast many disconsolate looks at the endless hexagons and octagons, before she indulged any distinct idea of relinquishing her task: at length, however, it did forcibly occur to her, that, *after all* she was not *obliged* to go on with it; and that really, patch-work was a thing that was better done by degrees, when one happens to want a job, than to be finished all at once. So with this thought (which would have been a very good one if it had occurred in proper time) she suddenly drew out her needle, thrust all her pieces, arranged and unarranged, into a drawer, and began to meditate a new project.

Fortunately, just at this juncture, some young ladies of their acquaintance called upon Charlotte and Caroline. They were attempting to establish a society amongst their young friends for working for the poor; and came to request their assistance. Caroline very cheerfully entered into the design; but as for Charlotte, nothing could exceed the forwardness of her zeal:—she took it up so warmly, that Caroline's appeared, in comparison, only lukewarm. It was proposed, that each member of the society should have an equal proportion of the work to do at her own house: but when the articles came to be distributed, Charlotte, in the heat of her benevolence, desired that a double portion might be allotted to her. Some of the younger ones admired

her industrious intentions; but the better judging advised her not to undertake too much at once. However, she would not be satisfied till her request was complied with. When the parcels of work arrived, Charlotte with exultation seized the larger one, and without a minute's delay commenced her charitable labours. The following morning she rose at four o'clock, to resume the employment; and not a little self-complacency did she feel, when after nearly two hours hard work, she still heard Caroline breathing in a sound sleep. But alas! Charlotte soon found that *work is work*, of whatever nature, or for whatever purpose. She now inwardly regretted that she had asked for *more* than her share; and the cowardly thought that *after all* she was not *obliged* to do it, next occurred to her. For *the present*, therefore, she squeezed all the things, done and undone, into what she called her *Dorcas bag*; and to banish unpleasant thoughts, she opened the first book that happened to lie within reach:—it proved to be “an Introduction to Botany.” Of this she had not read more than a page and a half, before she determined to collect some specimens herself, and having found a blank copy book, she hastened into the garden, where gathering a few common flowers, she proceeded to dissect them, not, it is to be feared, with much scientific nicety. Perhaps as many as three pages of this copy book were bespread with

her specimens, before she discovered, that botany was a *dry study*.

. It would be too tedious to enumerate all the subsequent ephemeral undertakings which filled up the remainder of the six weeks. At the expiration of that time Mrs. Dawson returned. On the next morning after her arrival, she reminded her daughters of the account she expected of their employments during her absence; and desired them to set out, on two tables in the school room, every thing they had done that could be exhibited; together with the books they had been reading. Charlotte would gladly have been excused her part of the exhibition; but this was not permitted; and she reluctantly followed her sister to make the preparation. When the two tables were spread, their mother was summoned to attend. Caroline's, which was first examined, contained first, her various exercises in the different branches of study, regularly executed, the same as usual: and there were papers placed in the books she was reading in school hours, to shew how far she had proceeded in them. Besides these, she had read in her leisure time, in French, Florian's *Numa Pompilius*, and in English, Mrs. More's *Practical Piety*, and some part of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*. All the needlework which had been left to do or not, at her option, was neatly finished: and her parcel of linen for the poor was also completely and well done. The only instance

in which Caroline had availed herself of her mother's licence, was, that she had prolonged her drawing lessons a little every day, in order to present her mother with a pretty pair of screens, with flowers copied from nature; these were last of all placed on the table with an affectionate note, requesting her acceptance of them.

Mrs. Dawson, having carefully examined this table, proceeded to the other, which was quite piled up with different articles. Here, amid the heap, were her three pages of short-hand; several scraps of paper containing fragments of her poetical history; the piece (not large enough for a doll's cradle) of her patchwork counterpane; her botanical specimens; together with the large unfinished pike out of the *Dorcas bag*: many of the articles of which were begun, but not one quite finished. There was a baby's cap with no border, a frock body without sleeves, and the skirt only half hemmed at the bottom; and slides, tapes, and button holes, were all, without exception, omitted. After these followed a great variety of thirds, halves, and quarters of undertakings, each perhaps good in *itself*, but quite useless in its unfinished state.

The examination being at length ended, Mrs. Dawson retired, without a single comment, to her dressing-room: where, in about an hour afterwards, she summoned the girls to attend her. Here, also, were two tables laid out, with several articles on

each. Their mother then leading Caroline to the first, told her that as the reward of her industry and *perseverance*, the contents of the table were her own. Here, with joyful surprise, she beheld first, a little gold watch, which Mrs. Dawson said she thought a suitable present for one who had made a good use of her time : a small telescope next appeared ; and lastly, Paley's Natural Theology, neatly bound. Charlotte was then desired to take possession of the contents of the other table, which were considerably more numerous. The first prize she drew out was a very beautiful French fan ; but upon opening it, it stretched out in an oblong shape for want of the pin to confine the sticks at bottom. Then followed a new parasol ; but when unfurled there was no catch to confine it, so that it would not remain spread. A penknife handle without a blade, and the blade without the handle, next presented themselves to her astonished gaze. In great confusion she then unrolled a paper which discovered a telescope apparently like her sister's ; but on applying it to her eye, she found it did not contain a single lens ; so that it was no better than a roll of pasteboard. She was, however, greatly encouraged to discover that the last remaining article was a watch ; for as she heard it tick, she felt no doubt that this, at least was complete, but, upon examination, she discovered that there was no hour hand, the minute hand alone pursuing its lonely and useless track.

Charlotte, whose conscience had very soon explained to her the moral of all this, now turned from the tantalizing table in confusion, and burst into an agony of tears. Caroline wept also, and Mrs. Dawson after an interval of silence, thus addressed her daughters.

“It is quite needless for me to explain my reasons for making you such presents, Charlotte. I assure you, your papa and I have had a very painful employment the past hour in spoiling them all for you. If I had found on your table in the school room any one thing that had been properly *finished*, you would have received one complete present to answer it; but this you know was not the case. I should be very glad if this disappointment should teach you what I have hitherto vainly endeavoured to impress upon you, that as all those things, pretty or useful as they are in themselves, are rendered totally useless for want of *completeness*; so exertion without *perseverance* is no better than *busy idleness*. That employment does not deserve the name of industry, which requires the stimulus of novelty to keep it going. Those who will only work so long as they are *amused*, will do no more good in the world, either to themselves or others, than those who refuse to work at all. If I had required you to pass the six weeks of my absence *irrebed*, or in counting your fingers, you would, I suppose, have thought it a sad waste of time; and yet, I appeal to you whether

(with the exception of an hour or two of needle-work) the whole mass of articles on your table could produce any thing more useful. And thus, my dear, may life be squandered away, in a succession of busy nothings.

“ I have now a proposal to make to you. These presents, which you are to take possession of as they are, I advise you to lay by carefully. Whenever you can shew me any thing that you have begun, and voluntarily *finished*, you may at the same time bring with you one of these things, beginning with those of least value, to which I will immediately add the part that is deficient. Thus, by degrees, you may have them all completed ; and if by this means you should acquire the wise and *virtuous* habit of *perseverance*, it will be far more valuable to you than the richest present you could possibly receive.”

IX.

MATTHEW XXV. 2.

"And five of them were wise, and five were foolish."

WE are accustomed to employ a great variety of terms, and to make many nice distinctions in describing the varying shades of human character. But the language of the Bible never descends to these particulars. It does not recognize those minute differences to which, in judging of each other, we attach so much importance. "The righteous and the wicked, the just and the unjust, the sheep and the goats—he that feareth the Lord and he that feareth him not," such are the concise distinctions which divide the whole human race in the estimation of the Judge of all the earth. The text furnishes us with one of a similar kind—"The wise and the foolish."

It is exceedingly probable that if the ten virgins of whom this brief account is given, had been described by some human observer, there would have

been distinct characters drawn ; and it is not very unlikely, that the statement of the text would then have been directly reversed ; and that the five wise would have been called the five foolish. One of them, perhaps, would have been pronounced a hypocrite ; another an enthusiast ; another a bigot ; the fourth melancholy ; and the fifth mad. While the other five, who were, perhaps, "wiser in their generation than these children of light," might have been the subjects of high encomiums ; for it often happens that those things which are "abomination in the sight of God, are highly esteemed amongst men." One of them, it may be, would have been extolled for her grace and beauty ; another for her distinguished attainments ; a third for her wit and gaiety ; a fourth for her engaging manners ; and a fifth for her spirit and independence. However this might be, their characters are very concisely, and certainly very faithfully summed up by Him to whom all hearts are open : passing over unimportant shades of difference, he declares that, "five of them were wise, and five were foolish."

God alone knows the worth of the soul that He has made. He alone can duly estimate the treasures of immortal happiness that are at stake ; or comprehend the terrors of his impending wrath. Nothing therefore, in His mind, is wisdom but that conduct which secures his favour ; and the deepest folly, that which risks the loss of it. Thus

the most sagacious and gifted men in the estimation of their fellow creatures, are often only fools in His sight; and "the foolish things of this world" will one day "confound their wisdom."

This grand division of mankind still exists; and might be traced in every neighbourhood and in many a family. In passing the public streets we observe dwellings of every variety of style and appearance. Some bespeak opulence and splendour; others comfort and competence; others are evidently the abodes of penury and want. But these differences are of little moment. Enter these dwellings and it will be found, that in some of them "prayer is wont to be made;" there are Bibles in every closet, and the fear of God reigns in the family. While other houses, on the right hand and on the left, witness only the bustle of business, the pursuits of pleasure, or the gratifications of ease and indulgence: religion is either banished such households altogether, or the mere form of it is maintained, while the god of this world receives the homage of the heart. Thus might the families of every town and village be classed into the wise and the foolish. And yet this division is too general; remark any particular family where a profession of religion is made; and even there, it will probably be found, that the same separation must be observed. The parents, perhaps, may be seen retiring to their closets to pray

and to weep for themselves and for their children ; while the children forget God, and care for none of those things. Or while one or two young persons in a family are beginning to think upon their ways and to turn to the Lord, the others remain indifferent and unimpressed ; “ some of them are wise, and some are foolish.”

And might not these words be inscribed on most of the pews in a place of worship ? There sits one who knows something of the value of his soul—he hungers and thirsts for spiritual things ; and prays and hears as for his life. Next to him, perhaps, is another, who either listens not at all, or hears only for amusement ; or, at best, he proves to be but a stony ground hearer, who, “ having no root,” his good resolutions soon “ wither away ; or are choked by the cares and pleasures of this life.”

It is a melancholy sight to see persons, Sabbath after Sabbath, taking their accustomed places, conforming to the ordinary modes of worship, but without making the least apparent movement towards the good ways of God. They are even content to class themselves with the *unprofessing* part of the congregation. And some are so ignorant and so thoughtless as to say, that as they make no pretensions, nobody has a right to find fault. Young people, in many instances, appear to *rest*, as it were, in their unconcern ; as if they

knew not that to *them* also, are freely offered all the blessings of salvation: and that *they* too, are personally warned to “flee from the wrath to come.”

It is, however, no uncommon thing for the five foolish occasionally to look with an indolent envy at the stock of oil with which the five wise are provided. “I wish I were as serious as such a one,” is the secret language of many a heart;—but this too often only means that they wish they were as *safe*. Why are not such wishes oftener cherished and followed up with earnest importunate prayer? “All things are ready.” Let the most careless, unimpressed, and worldly-minded, but rouse themselves to *ask*, and even they shall receive the very same blessings that their most pious friends enjoy. There is oil enough for all the lamps; O, the folly of waiting till there is no time to procure it! When, however, persons do feel inclined, under any sudden impression, to ask, they have reason to take great heed that they do not “ask amiss:” observe the terms that are employed in Scripture, as descriptive of true and prevailing prayer; we are exhorted to “lift up our voice for understanding; to seek it as for hidden treasure; to strive, or (as it means) to *agonize* to enter in at the strait gate.” If such is the fervour and earnestness and diligence which the importance of the case demands, no wonder that listless,

heartless, or occasional petitions receive no answer.

Judging of others is an idle, uncertain, and most injurious employment. It is not intended that these hints should set any one who may read them, about that unprofitable business. It is not for us to decide who amongst our acquaintance or fellow worshippers are wise, or who are foolish. No; but let every reader put the serious question to himself; to which class do *I* belong; where should *I* be classed by him who decided in the case of those ten virgins, each of whom held a lamp, and professed to "let her light shine before men?" It is possible that some may feel a difficulty in answering the question, because they are so fully determined to get oil to their lamps in good time, that they cannot consent to class themselves amongst the foolish. But, alas! just so they also intended who at last were told to "depart." In religion, there is no *good* time but the *present time*, and it is the highest folly, perceiving what is good, to defer, being possessed of it. Let every one who is conscious that the bridegroom's voice would be to him a sound of terror and consternation, pray with unremitting earnestness to be made "wise unto salvation," remembering that appalling declaration which seems particularly applicable to persons who had made some profession, and were "almost persuaded to be

Christians," that "many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

X.

TEMPER; OR THE TWO OLD LADIES.

IN a huge old-fashioned red brick house, with a great many tall narrow windows in front, and a high flight of stone steps up to the door, lived two old ladies, commonly called Mrs. Abigail and Mrs. Dorothy. They had lived there for many and many a year; they never altered the fashion of their dress, and were very exact and regular in all their habits and customs. Every day of the week they were driven out at the same hour, in their old-fashioned coach, by their old-fashioned coachman; and at the same hour they returned home; so that

when the coach passed through the town, either going or returning, every body knew what was o'clock. They neither paid visits nor received company at their house; and the few servants they kept had lived with them so many years that none but the aged people of the place could remember the least alteration in the household..

The old ladies dressed exactly alike; and were nearly of the same age; their customs, also, were quite similar; so that to observe them at a distance, it might be supposed there was scarcely any difference between them: and yet there was a difference. Mrs. Abigail was very rich, though nobody knew *how* rich; but not so Mrs. Dorothy, although she was her own sister; for having in her youth in some way displeased the old gentleman, her father, he left all his fortune to his eldest daughter; so that Mrs. Dorothy depended almost entirely upon the bounty—or rather upon the *justice* of her sister. But this was not the greatest difference between them: for Mrs. Abigail was ill-natured; and Mrs. Dorothy was good-natured; and it is this kind of thing that makes the greatest real difference between persons, in the mind of all those with whom they have to do. The consequence of this, in the present instance, was, that all the old servants loved Mrs. Dorothy better than they loved their mistress; and waited upon her, not only with more affection, but with more respect. And as respect and affection

are things which can neither be concealed where they are felt, nor successfully imitated where they are not, Mrs. Abigail saw as plainly *how it was*, as if they had told her so in the most express terms. Now this aggravated her temper beyond any thing : she thought it so very strange, and hard, and ungrateful, that she, to whom they were indebted for all they had, who paid them such handsome wages, and made them such generous presents, should be in less esteem than her poor sister Dorothy, who had nothing of that sort in her power. No ; but “ such as she had she gave them ; ” and that happened to be of more sterling value than their mistress’s silver and gold. At first Mrs. Abigail was so impatient under the grievance, that she turned away several faithful servants for no other real reason than this private one : but finding that the new comers regularly fell into the same fault, she was soon glad to recal her old domestics.

Mrs. Abigail’s temper did not soften as she grew older ; she was vexed and tormented that she could not purchase, with all her money, that of which every human bosom feels the need ; and every year increased both the cause and the effect of her disquietude. There was not a tradesman, nor a tenant, nor a neighbour, but would touch his hat with more cordiality to Mrs. Dorothy than to Mrs. Abigail ; for nobody could help seeing the difference : it was even perceptible as they passed along in the old

coach; for, while Mrs. Abigail used always to sit back in an erect posture, looking neither to the right nor left, the round good-natured face of Mrs. Dorothy might always be seen, sometimes smiling at the children, and sometimes nodding to the neighbours as she passed their doors.

Mrs. Abigail used perpetually to complain of her wrongs and grievances to Mrs. Dorothy; who always heard her very patiently; and said what she could to soften and console her. She very rarely ventured to hint either at the reason, or the remedy; for that irritated her beyond any thing; and always brought forth the whole list of her benefactions to witness that the fault was not in *her*.

After a long succession of years, a circumstance occurred in the family which made a greater alteration in its aspect, than if the China images on the best parlour mantel-piece, had been transported to the sitting parlour mantel-piece; which would, however, have been considered a most memorable innovation. This was, Mrs. Abigail's taking it into her head to adopt a little orphan girl, a child scarcely five years of age, the daughter of a poor minister lately deceased.

Little Mary was a very pretty, artless, engaging child. Full of spirits, and unconscious of her misfortunes, she entered the great house without any adequate idea of its dignity, and felt herself quite

at home the moment she found something to play with. At first the old ladies could not exactly say whether they were most amused or most *put out* by the noisy frolics of their new inmate. Mrs. Abigail, at least, felt considerable uncertainty on the subject. But Mrs. Dorothy soon found that it added materially to her happiness. For, although she certainly was *fidgitted* at the unwonted sight of doll's clothes strewed upon the carpet, and to see the covers to the crimson damask chair-bottoms unceremoniously pulled up, and left in wrecks and wrinkles, and above all, that the cat's back was sometimes stroked the wrong way—yet, the innocent smiles, the playful gambols, and engaging prattle of the child went to her heart, and awoke sensations of delight and tenderness, which must needs languish, even in benevolent minds, when it is long since they were called into exercise. So much were the good ladies sometimes amused, that the wind might shift from south-east to north-west without its being noted by either of them ; a thing unprecedented heretofore. And often Mrs. Abigail herself, was so much diverted by her little protégée that she has been observed not to gape more than seven times during a whole afternoon.

But notwithstanding all this, things did not go on quite so smoothly as may be imagined. Mrs. Abigail's grand object in adopting the little girl was, that she might train up some body to love

her; and having heard that you may teach a child any thing, she thought by taking one so young she should be sure to succeed in her design. Accordingly, she resolved to instil it into her youthful mind, as her highest duty, to love her benefactress; and she did not fail by reiterated instructions to give the child to understand, that for every thing she eat and wore and played with, she was indebted to her alone. Now it was a little strange, that after sixty years' experience, this good lady did not know any better way of securing her object; and that she should imagine that so *very* small a sacrifice as that of giving out a little money from an ample store, would alone procure so invaluable a blessing as that of the affection of a fellow creature.

Children are excellent physiognomists; and little Mary soon learnt to whom to apply for any assistance or sympathy in her play; and she never failed, when she was tired or sleepy, to run and lay her head on Mrs. Dorothy's lap. It happened not unfrequently, that she was very noisy in her mirth: so much so, that, to use her own expression, "it absolutely went through and through Mrs. Abigail's head;" and even Mrs. Dorothy's did not escape with impunity. Now, on these and similar occasions, when her patience was quite exhausted (which generally happened pretty early) Mrs. Abigail would begin to scold; but in spite of this, and

of Mrs. Dorothy's repeated admonitions of "softly ! softly ! my little dear," the little dear would continue romping about, till she got such a thorough trimming from Mrs. Abigail, as made her cry sadly, and wish that her own mamma would come again. When the storm was over, the old lady often relented; and trotting to her china closet, she would take a sweet queen cake or macaroon (articles on which she placed her chief dependence in the management of the child) and hold it out to her with a beneficent smile, which seemed to say, "Sure you *must* love me now." On one of these occasions, as soon as Mary had devoured the bribe, she called her, saying, "Come hither, my dear, come to me, and tell me now, don't you love me?" Retaining a lively remembrance of her recent scolding, the child hesitated; and on the question being repeated, she answered, "No."

"Then you are the most ungrateful little creature that ever was," exclaimed the old lady, "and you may take that for your pains;" so saying, she gave her a smart box on the ear. Mary ran off roaring, and hid her face in Mrs. Dorothy's lap. Mrs. Dorothy knowing that would not *do*, raised her up, saying—

"O, now you are a very naughty little Miss ! what, not love poor Mrs. Abigail, that gives you so many pretty things, and such nice cakes ! O fie, I am quite ashamed of you ! Sure you love her, don't you ?"

"I love *you*," said the child, "because you don't beat *me*."

"Well, to be sure," exclaimed Mrs. Abigail, "there is nothing but ingratitude in this world! nothing else; old and young, all alike. Such a little creature as that too, who could have thought it!"

Thus little Mary had her troubles, like other people, in the midst of her apparent prosperity. However, she had a never failing friend and solace in Mrs. Dorothy; and when they were alone, she would often throw her little arms round her neck, and kiss her repeatedly, saying—

"I do love you; I do love you very much, Mrs. *Doroty*." In return Mrs. Dorothy used to kiss her fondly, and say,

"And I love you my darling! my jewel! my pretty one!" never failing to add, "but you know you must love poor Mrs. Abigail too; because she is so good to you, and gives you such nice things." At which little Mary used to slide off her lap, and run away to play.

One day Mrs. Abigail was taken very ill, and could not leave her bed; and kind hearted Mrs. Dorothy came down to breakfast with the tears in her eyes.

"What are you crying for?" says little Mary.

"Because, my dear, poor Mrs. Abigail is very ill, and cannot come down stairs."

“Why then, you know, we shall have nobody to scold us all day; so why do you cry for *that*?” said little Mary.

In the spring little Mary was attacked with the measles, and had them very severely. Notwithstanding her ill-nature, Mrs. Abigail was really fond of the child; and she attended her in her illness with much solicitude; took her on her lap, rocked her to and fro; once when she was very restless she spoke to her in soothing tones; and when little Mary, in taking some barley water, spilt a little of it over her silk gown, and began to cry from the apprehension of being punished for it, Mrs. Abigail said, “Never mind, love, I’ll not be angry with you *now*.” Upon which little Mary raised her head, looked up in her face for a moment with surprise, and then said, “I love *you, now*, Mrs. Abigail.”

Mrs. Abigail looked surprised in her turn: she pressed the child to her bosom with unwonted fondness; the tears came in her eyes; for those few words, uttered by a little child, gave her more real pleasure than any thing that had happened to her for many a day. Being alone, she fell into a deep reverie; but the thoughts of a person unaccustomed to reflection, are too indistinct and crude for repetition. However, the sense and the substance of her meditation was something like this:—

“What! will one kind word, one act of forbearance and good nature, do more than all the

favours I have bestowed? O, if I had considered this in early life—if I had but seen that it is not money but kindness, not gifts, but good nature, that purchases affection, how differently would my life have passed!—Ah sister Dorothy! Sister Dorothy! I have had all the money, but you have had all the happiness!”

XI.

MAN AND ANIMALS.

MR. F. and his children were walking one summer's evening, in what were familiarly called the high woods. A narrow path conducted them through the underwood, where straggling branches of the wild rose intercepted them at every step: the rich and variegated stems of the forest trees were illumined here and there in bright spots, by golden beams of the setting sun, which streamed

through the interstices of the massy foliage. Swarms of merry gnats danced in the open spaces of the wood; birds of every note sang, in uninterrupted gladness, amid its deep recesses; the nimble squirrel was observed occasionally leaping from bough to bough; and the timid eye of the wild rabbit was seen peeping from behind the roots of the trees, and then, swiftly disappearing, she escaped into her inaccessible fortresses. How happy are young people, whose taste is raised to the enjoyment of these elevated and simple pleasures, and who find in their parents, intelligent friends, capable of cultivating this taste, of inspiring and guiding their love of knowledge, and of giving a right direction to both!

The liberty and happiness evidently enjoyed by the various little inhabitants of these woods, gave a turn to the evening's conversation, as the party returned home.

"I think," says little Joe, "that if I were going to be changed into any thing else, I should like best to be a rabbit, and to live in the woods; they seem so happy and comfortable here!"

FATHER. Can you tell me, Joe, what is the greatest difference between you and a rabbit?

JOE. Why, papa, we are as different as can be. Rabbits have got long ears, and four legs, and are covered all over with soft hair.

FATHER. So far, then, the rabbit seems to have

the advantage of you, for it can run faster with four legs than you can with only two; and its long ears enable it to hear more acutely; and it has a warm dress, ready made, without any trouble or expense: now can you think of any thing in which you are better off than the rabbit?

Joe was such a very little boy that he could not think of any thing; but his brother Edward soon answered for him, saying, "Why, we are better off than rabbits, almost in every thing: we can talk, and laugh, and read, and write, and learn Latin."

FATHER. It is true the rabbit cannot do these things; but then she is quite independent of them, for she answers all the purposes of her existence perfectly well without their assistance. Richard, can you give us a more accurate account of the difference between Man and Animals?

RICHARD. I suppose, papa, the chief difference is our having reason, and they only instinct.

FATHER. But in order to understand what we mean by the terms reason and instinct, I think three things may be mentioned, in which the difference very distinctly appears.

RICHARD. What are they, papa?

FATHER. Let us first, to bring the parties as nearly on a level as possible, consider man in a savage state, wholly occupied, like the beasts of the field, in providing for the wants of his animal na-

ture; and here the first distinction that appears between him and the creatures around him, is, *the use of implements*.

RICHARD. Ah, I should never have thought of that.

FATHER. When the savage provides himself with a hut, or a crawl, or a wigwam, for shelter, or that he may store up his provision, he does no more than is done by the rabbit, the beaver, the bee, and birds of every species. But the man cannot make any progress in his work without something like tools, however rude and simple in their form: he must provide himself with an axe, even before he can lop down a tree for its timber; whereas these animals form their burrows, their cells, or their nests, with the most mathematical nicety, with no other tools than those with which nature has provided them. In cultivating the ground, also, man can do nothing without a spade, or a plough; nor can he reap what he has sown, till he has shaped an instrument, with which to cut down his harvests. But the animals provide for themselves and their young without any of these things.

EDWARD. Then, here again, the animals are the best off.

FATHER. That is not our present inquiry: now for the second distinction: Man, in all his operations *makes mistakes*, animals make none.

EDWARD. Do animals never make mistakes?

FATHER. Why, Edward, did you ever see such a thing, or hear of such a thing, as a little bird sitting disconsolate on a twig, lamenting over her half finished nest, and puzzling her little poll to know how to complete it? Did you ever see the cells of a bee-hive in clumsy irregular shapes, or observe any thing like a discussion in the little community, as if there was a difference of opinion amongst the architects?

The boys laughed, and owned they had never heard of such a thing.

FATHER. Animals are even better physicians than we are, for when they are ill, they will, many of them, seek out some particular herb, which they do not use as food, and which possesses a medicinal quality exactly suited to the complaint. Whereas, the whole College of Physicians will dispute for a century, and not at last agree upon the virtues of a single drug. Man undertakes nothing in which he is not more or less puzzled: he must try numberless experiments before he can bring his undertakings to any thing like perfection; and these experiments imply a succession of *mistakes*. Even the simplest operations of domestic life are not well performed without some *experience*; and the term of man's life is half wasted, before he has done with his mistakes, and begins to profit by his lessons.

EDWARD. Then, papa, how is it? for after all we *are* better than animals.

FATHER. Observe, then, our third distinction, which is, that animals make no *improvements*: while the knowledge, and the skill, and the success of man are perpetually on the increase. The inventions and discoveries of one generation, are, through the medium of literature, handed down to succeeding ones; so that the accumulated experience of all former ages and nations is ready for our use, before we begin to think and act for ourselves. The result of which is, that the most learned and ingenious amongst the ancient philosophers, Aristotle, or Archimedes, might learn in an hour, from a modern school boy, more than the laborious study of their lives could enable them to discover.

RICHARD. Well, I am glad we have thought of something at last, to prove that men are wiser than rabbits.

FATHER. Herein appears the difference between what we call instinct and reason. Animals, in all their operations, follow the first impulse of nature, or that invariable law which God has implanted in them. In all they do undertake, therefore, their works are more perfect and regular than those of men. But man, having been endowed with the faculty of thinking or reasoning about what he does, although (being an imperfect and fallible creature)

this liberty exposes him to mistake, and is perpetually leading him into error; yet by patience, perseverance, and industry, and by long experience, he at last achieves what angels may, perhaps, behold with admiration. A bird's nest, is indeed, a perfect and beautiful structure; yet the nest of a swallow of the nineteenth century, is not at all more commodious, or elegant, than those that were built amid the rafters of Noah's ark. But if we compare (I will not say Adam's bower, for that was doubtless in the finest style of nature's own architecture) but if we compare the wigwam of the North American Indian, with the temples and palaces of ancient Greece and Rome, we then shall see to what man's *mistakes*, rectified and improved upon, conduct him. Animals can provide for their wants, and for those of their offspring, with the utmost adroitness; and just so much, and no more, did their antediluvian ancestry: while man, after having provided for his first necessities, emerging gradually from the savage state, begins to cultivate poetry and music, proceeds to the knowledge of arts and sciences, unknown and unthought of by his rude forefathers, till (in humble imitation of the works of God himself) he gives exquisite construction to the rudest materials which nature has left for his use; supplying those artificial wants and wishes, for which it was beneath

her dignity to provide; and while his hand thus executes all that is ingenious and beautiful, his thought glances at all that is magnificent and sublime.

. XII.

ECCLESIASTICUS XIX. 1.

"He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little."

ALTHOUGH this is not the declaration of an inspired writer, yet it is certainly the language of wisdom and experience, and is well worthy attentive consideration. If it had been asserted, that he that despiseth small things shall fall suddenly and immediately, it might have been considered by some as a more formidable threat. But, in fact, the peril of a person of the disposition here described, is greatly increased by the gradual nature

of his decline. No danger is greater than that which approaches us by imperceptible steps; since we are not then likely to place ourselves in the posture of defence. Thus, if all the ill consequences of a bad habit were experienced at the very commencement of it, there is scarcely any one so weak or so indulgent, but would summon strength of mind enough to break it off at the outset. Could a person but glance at the future extent, and the massy strength of that chain, which he is forming for himself, link by link, in every little indulgence of an evil habit, he would instantly snap it asunder. But neither seeing this, nor believing the testimony made by the universal experience of others, he proceeds, despising such small things, till his fall is inevitable and great. Temptation, in its early approaches, is comparatively weak: and a slight effort, a trifling sacrifice, would then be sufficient to overcome it. This is the time, the happy, the favourable opportunity; and he who sees the importance, or (if we might be allowed the expression) the *magnitude* of small things, will then conquer. With what keen remorse have such seasons been looked back upon by elderly persons now bound down by "twice ten thousand chains," who lament, in hardened impotence, that when it would have been easy—when a trifling act of self-denial, a momentary reference to principle and conscience would have sufficed, they despised the

small transgression, and thus commenced their gradual but certain thralldom. Observe this most affecting and lamentable sight, an old person in the slavery of sin, and inquire how he became so hopelessly enthralled;—and he must confess it was by *little and little*: the declension was so gradual, that it is only by looking back to what he was, that he can tell how far he has fallen. There was a time when he possessed sensibility; when he dreaded vice; when he felt a respect for moral excellence, and even desired to possess it. But despising small things, whether good or evil, he neglected those early movements of his mind towards goodness, as well as his trifling deviations from it, and thus became what he is.

It is very possible that persons of feeble characters, and possessed of no true strength or energy of mind, may, under the influence of sudden excitation, make a noble sacrifice, or resist a forcible temptation: but, as it has been often remarked, greatness of mind is apparent rather on little than on great occasions. True magnanimity considers no duty too small to be punctually and properly discharged; no indulgence so trivial that it may be indolently yielded to.

In the management of the temper, on which our own comfort as well as that of all around us so much depends, nothing effective will be done but by a watchful attention to *little things*. The

temper is oftener ruffled by slight provocations than by great and serious injuries. Now if *because* they are slight we think it not worth while to resist them, if we suffer a cloud to pass over the brow, on every such occasion, the result will be (for such occasions are of daily occurrence) that by little and little these clouds will gather and rest there. A morose or a fretful temper will be fixed upon us; and all power of self-government lost. If, on the contrary, a resolute determination had been made at first, not to yield to these small and frequent invitations, this effort, continued day after day, would soon have strengthened into a good habit; rendering it not only pleasant but *easy*, ever after, to exercise forbearance, and to give the "soft answer that turneth away wrath."

It is in small things that brotherly kindness and charity chiefly consist. Little attentions, trifling, but perpetual acts of self-denial; a minute consultation of the wants and wishes, tastes and tempers of others; an imperceptible delicacy in avoiding what will give pain;—these are the small things that diffuse peace and love wherever they are exercised, and which outweigh a thousand acts of showy heroism. That which requires the greatest effort is the greatest charity: and it is beyond comparison a greater exertion to keep a daily and hourly watch and restraint upon ourselves for the sake of others, than to summon our whole stock of

forbearance or benevolence once or twice in our lives, in order to perform some deed of munificence, or to forgive a great injury. "Take up your cross *daily*," our Lord says:—it is but a light one, indeed, but shall we on that account despise it?

The truth of the assertion contained in these words, might be illustrated in a great variety of instances. It is applicable, indeed, to all the evil courses, and inveterate habits of wickedness and profaneness that disgrace society. Habits of profusion are commonly formed by thinking little of small indulgencies, of trifling, but needless expenses:—more fortunes have been squandered by *little and little* than by large and extravagant sums:—the aggregate of such expenses at the year's end, or at seven years' end, would surprise and alarm many a sanguine and uncalculating spendthrift. Nor is it less true, that a covetous and miserly temper is formed by the same *gradual* process; by petty savings, and little acts of meanness.

But that fall which is at once the most frequent, and the most lamentable, is from the restraints of a religious education. This is generally a gradual and insensible decline. A young person who has been trained to the habit of private prayer is, on some occasion, tempted to omit it: it is but a *small thing*, he thinks, to pass it for once; but another occasion, still more pressing, soon presents itself. The conscience, slightly as it was wounded

in the first instance, puts in a still feebler remonstrance now: and every time it occurs in future, its voice will become less distinct. In the mean time, other religious duties will be neglected in the same proportion. Thus, by little and little, the conscience becomes insensible; till the individual has fallen so far, as to live without calling upon God, and to forget the value of his soul. And all this chiefly arises from the delusion of supposing that the little temptation to which we yield to-day, we shall have more strength or more willingness to resist to-morrow, a supposition which is directly the reverse of the truth, and contrary to universal observation and experience.

There can be no appearance more hopeful and promising in childhood and youth, than a tenderness of conscience, respecting *small things*: a child who is never inclined to plead excuses for what is known to be wrong by saying "Is it not a little one?" who resists an improper thought, forbids a hasty word, who fears the slightest deviation from the truth, bids fair to rise, by gradual, but certain steps, to true excellence.

But whatever may be *our* view of the subject, it is certain that God does not, in any sense, condemn *small things*. He looks at motives more than at actions; at thoughts more than at words; and by these we shall be judged.

And let us be thankful that "He does not despise

the day of small things;”—the bruised reed, the smoking flax, the grain of mustard seed, the little leaven:—over these small beginnings He watches with patient and gracious care, till by little and little they attain to perfection.

XIII.

THE WORM AND THE SNAIL.

A Fable.

A LITTLE worm too close that played
In contact with a gardener's spade,
Writhing about in sudden pain,
Perceived that he was cut in twain;
His nether half, left short and free,
Much doubting its identity.
However, when the shock was past,
New circling rings were formed so fast,

By nature's hand which fails her never,
That soon he was as long as ever.
But yet the insult and the pain,
This little reptile did retain,
In what, in man, is called the brain.

One fine spring evening, bright and wet,
Ere yet the April sun was set,
When slimy reptiles crawl and coil
Forth from the soft and humid soil,
He left his subterranean clay
To move along the gravelly way;
Where suddenly his course was stopt
By something on the path that dropt;
When, with precaution and surprise,
He straight shrunk up to half his size.
That 'twas a stone was first his notion,
But soon discovering loco-motion,
He recognised the coat of mail,
And wary antlers of a snail,
Which some young rogue (we beg his pardon)
Had flung into his neighbour's garden.

The snail all shattered and infirm,
Deplored his fate, and told the worm.
"Alas!" says he, "I know it well,
All this is owing to my shell:
They could not send me up so high,
Describing circles in the sky,
But that, on this account, 'tis known
I bear resemblance to a stone:"

Would I could rid me of my case,
And find a tenant for the place!
I'll make it known to all my kin;—
' 'This house to let—inquire within.'"

" Good!" says the worm, " the bargain's
struck ;

I take it, and admire my luck :
That shell, from which you'd fain be free,
Is just the very thing for me.
Oft have I wished, when danger calls,
For such impervious castle walls.
Both for defence and shelter made,
From greedy crow, and murderous spade :
Yes, neighbour snail, I'll hire the room,
And pay my rent when strawberries come.
" Do," says the snail, " and I'll declare,
You'll find the place in good repair ;
With winding ways that will not fail
To accommodate your length of tail."
(This fact the wily rogue concealing—
The fall had broken in his ceiling."
" O," says the sanguine worm, " I knew
That I might safely deal with you."
Thus was the tenement transferred,
And that without another word.

Off went the snail in houseless plight :
Alas! it proved a frosty night,
And ere a peep of morning light,

One wish supreme he found prevail ;—
(In all the world this foolish snail
Saw nothing he would like so well)—
Which was—that he had got a shell.
But soon for this he ceased to sigh :
A little duck came waddling by,
Who having but a youthful bill,
Had ventured not so large a pill
(E'en at imperious hunger's call)
As this poor reptile, house and all.
But finding such a dainty bite
All ready to his appetite,
Down went the snail, whose last lament,
Mourned his deserted tenement.

Meantime the worm had spent his strength,
In vain attempts to curl his length
His small apartment's space about ;
For head or tail must needs stick out.
Now, if this last was left, 'twas more
Exposed to danger than before ;
And 'twould be vastly strange, he said,
To sit in doors without one's head.
Alas ! he now completely bears
The unknown weight of household cares ;
And wishes much some kind beholder
Would take the burthen off his shoulder.

Now broke the dawn ; and soon with fear,
Feeling the shock of footsteps near,

He tried to reach that wished for goal,
The shelter of a neighbouring hole ;
Which proved, when danger threatened sore,
A certain refuge, heretofore.
But failed him now this last resort ;
His new appendage stopt him short :
For all his efforts would not do
To force it in, or drag it through.
Oh then, poor worm ! what words can say
How much he wished his shell away !
But wishes all were vain, for oh !
The garden roller, dreaded foe !
Came growling by, and did not fail,
To crush our hero, head and tail,
—Just when the duck devoured the snail.

Thus says the fable :—learn from hence,
It argues want of common sense,
To think our trials and our labours,
Harder and heavier than our neighbours' :
Or that 'twould lighten toils and cares,
To give them ours in change for theirs ;
For whether man's appointed lot
Be really equalized or not,
(A point we need not now discuss,)
Habit makes ours the best to us.

XIV.

LETTER ADDRESSED TO A YOUNG LADY, WHO HAD
REQUESTED ADVICE ON THE CHOICE OF HER
PURSUITS.

I SHOULD feel pleasure in replying to my unknown correspondent, if I could hope that any suggestions of the kind required would prove beneficial. You must be aware, that to direct a person in the choice of pursuits, as well as to guide the course of them, is properly the business of a diligent superintendent, and that it is impossible in the compass of a letter to fulfil so important a task. All, therefore, that will be attempted, and all, it is hoped, that will be expected on this occasion, is to offer the few hints on the subject that may naturally suggest themselves.

The period usually allotted to education is so short, and life itself is so transient a season, in which concerns of such infinite importance are to be

transacted, that the first thing needful to attend to is, so to rectify our ideas as to view all the engagements and pursuits of life in their just *proportions*. Could these be but accurately ascertained, we should, perhaps, be surprised to see how some pursuits, in the highest general esteem, would either be entirely superseded by others little in repute, or *how much* the time usually allotted to them would be diminished. The various stations and circumstances of different individuals, must, doubtless, vary the calculation. To young people in the middle classes of society, the acquirements called accomplishments, are generally worse than useless; because they often give a distaste for the humbler concerns in which it is their first duty to engage; and when unaccompanied with knowledge, intelligence, and elegance of mind, they too commonly produce vanity and affectation; and at the same time form an unfavourable contrast with the manners and habits of such individuals. But even in the higher ranks of society, it is a lamentable mistake to suppose that there is any leisure for *trifling*; and surely it is trifling to devote a *large* portion of time to things which have *no* connexion with our highest duties and interests.

These remarks are not intended to apply to the acquisition of knowledge; which should be carefully distinguished from what is merely amusing or ornamental. A cultivated taste and a well stored mind

—a mind enlarged by habits of judicious reading—are not trifling advantages; because when duly subordinate to better things, they are important auxiliaries to religion itself. There are many inconsistencies amongst professors of religion—much *littleness* of character, much uncharitableness, censoriousness, and meanness, which may be traced rather to contracted views, than to wilful breaches of duty. There is a degree of self-knowledge, or acquaintance with human nature, of great use in detecting our less obvious faults, which is rarely possessed by persons of a confined education. It is true indeed, that a tender and enlightened conscience, and close walking with God, will enable us to see our secret sins, as it were, “in the light of his countenance:” but alas! these high attainments in religion are not so general, but that it is desirable to be furnished with other means of improvement, so far as our station and opportunities allow. An *enlightened* benevolence, free from all the petty jealousies of *selfishness* and *party-spirit*, is also most usually found amongst intelligent and educated Christians. And there can be no doubt but that these qualifications are essential to those who are called to *devise* and *superintend* plans for the moral and religious improvement of mankind.

A course of reading must, with most individuals, be regulated by the libraries to which they happen to have access. Would it not be a good plan to

select, from all the authors within your reach, the names of those of long established reputation (where that reputation is not tarnished by scepticism and immorality) and to confine yourself to their *best* works? till those have been read, it is a manifest deviation from the grand rule of *proportion* to devote much time to the passing productions of the day (light reading, as it is appropriately called) or to peruse the works of second-rate writers, or those of doubtful value. Thus a good taste and a sound judgment will be formed, which will by no means result from habits of indiscriminate reading.

It is perhaps unnecessary to caution you on the subject of novels: yet, to avoid all temptation of this kind, it would be wise in any one who wishes to preserve an unvitiated taste for what is solid and excellent, and who would “keep her heart with all diligence,” to make a settled resolution to avoid them altogether.

A young person who possesses some taste for intellectual pursuits, especially if in this respect she differs from many around her, is (allow me to say) in some danger of over-rating the value of these things; or rather of over-rating *herself* on that account. Now, as the grand end which we ought to propose to ourselves in every intellectual study, is our *moral* improvement, it is very needful to maintain a careful watch over our minds and

tempers in this view: remembering, that while sound and extensive knowledge ever renders the possessor of it modest and wise, superficial acquirements are apt to produce an assuming confidence, and self conceit.

It is a great happiness that your education has been religious;—and a still greater subject of thankfulness if this advantage has been suitably improved. Yet, as religion, though of all others of the highest importance, is the one pursuit in most danger of being neglected, allow me to press it upon you, not to rest in a hope that some good impression has been made upon your mind; but resolve to consider all other engagements as trifling and unworthy of high interest, till this one concern is settled. Allow of no satisfaction in other pursuits till you have “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” If that were certain, which is, indeed, altogether uncertain; namely, that your life would be extended to old age, I should not press you with less earnestness to give all diligence and instant attention to this business. It is so very important to your peace of mind and welfare, here and hereafter, that the morning of your days, the best of time, *all* your time should be devoted to God. *How* desirable this is, they only know who are conscious of having spent their most vigorous years in the bondage of self-pleasing. Many defer a prompt and determined attention to religion on account of imagined

obstacles: but, in truth, difficulties vanish apace before earnest and sincere endeavours. All things are possible to those who are *resolved*: for what is "impossible to man, is possible to God," who will assuredly impart strength and willingness, and all things needful to those who importunately ask his aid. This is a pursuit worthy of our *ambition*; and in which we should not be contented with mediocrity; but "covet earnestly the *best* gifts." Many women are mentioned with honour in the Scriptures; not for their intellectual endowments, but for their faith, their zeal, their charity, their activity. And this leads me to remark, that while young persons are wise to embrace every proper opportunity of attending to the culture and furniture of their minds, yet there are, in these days, claims upon their time and talents of a still higher order. Sunday and weekly schools, Bible associations, and other benevolent undertakings, now happily occupy the leisure time of thousands of young persons: and form an additional and weighty argument against those showy acquisitions which engross so many precious hours. The sick, the poor, the ignorant, are always with us. Habits of active benevolence, when formed with simplicity and singleness of heart, will yield far more advantage to ourselves, than the limited nature of our exertions can possibly allow us to confer on others: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

You see I have written with great freedom ; yet not more, I hope, than your goodness will excuse. My ignorance of your temper, habits, and circumstances, must expose me to the mistake of laying most stress where least is needed. Relying, however, on a friendly and candid perusal of these brief remarks,

I remain, sincerely, your friend.

XV.

PSALM XC. 12.

" So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

IT is remarkable that David puts up this petition immediately after he had been accurately calculating the usual date of human life. " The days of our years," he says, " are threescore years and ten ; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years," &c. This fact being so clearly ascertained, and so universally admitted, what need can there be to ask assist-

ance in making so simple a calculation? There is no one so ignorant or so sanguine as to entertain a hope of greatly exceeding the appointed term of life: what then is the meaning of this prayer?

It is very true that nothing is more easy than to count over the number of our days; nor is it very difficult, at particular seasons, to admit a serious thought concerning their rapid flight and certain termination. But it is also true, and universal experience proves it to be so, that there is nothing more difficult than habitually to realize the brevity of life; that is, of our *own* life; or to retain a lively and influential impression of the certainty of death. That we are not naturally much impressed with it, is indeed, one of the most striking proofs of our fallen and deranged condition. A strange insensibility on this subject is not even confined to the young. Elderly and aged persons, whose minds are not deeply engaged with the things of God, often appear to forget the short step that there must be between them and death; and betray as much interest in the concerns of this life, as if they had never numbered their days at all. So far, then, from this petition being unnecessary, one of the first things we have need to pray for is a lively perception and recollection of our mortality. "So teach us to number our days." Were this concise prayer but universally adopted, and importunately pleaded, there would be an end to all thoughtlessness, all frivolity,

all earthliness of mind:—and the world, instead of displaying a scene of ceaseless bustle, strife and dissipation, would exhibit only a multitude of pilgrims and strangers, pressing on, with anxious solicitude, and yet with cheerful hope, to other regions.

That it is not sufficient barely to *know* the date of human life, is also evident from the many mistakes and illusions which exist respecting it; and to which the young, more especially, are exposed. In surveying a course of years, youthful vision views them in false perspective, which adds exceedingly to their apparent extent; and although every step they advance tends to correct this, and to render the line more natural and just, yet, it is not till long after youth is past, that we can measure our years with any accuracy. Then life begins to appear as it is; and we exclaim, “Behold, thou hast made my days as a hand’s breadth, and my years are as nothing before thee.” At this period, if the mind be alive to its eternal interests, we set out, as it were, with a quickened pace, and feel, in some degree, the necessity of having “the loins girt, and our lamps burning.”

But to the young, days and years not only appear longer than they really are, but they are prone to entertain delusive ideas with regard to what may be accomplished in them. Early in life it seems as though there were an abundance of time to *spare*;

and whatever is to be done, whether in qualifying themselves for this world or the next, they cannot see the necessity of doing it with *all their might*; since life, long life, is all before them. Now, there is no greater or more fatal mistake, than that of supposing that any period of life is, strictly speaking, a period of *leisure*. There are, indeed, times for rest, and for relaxation, but there is no time or *season* given us for *loitering*; nor can we ever do so without danger and loss. Every season has its appropriate business; and is all required for the fulfilment of important and indispensable duties. If, therefore, the proper business of childhood is delayed till that of youth should commence, and if the acquisitions suitable to youth are deferred till they infringe upon the engagements of maturity, a portion of our lives is wasted irrecoverably, and the loss will be felt throughout life.

Another common mistake in looking towards future time, is indulging a vague hope that coming days and years will be, as it were, more capacious, or more extended than the present; so as to afford greater and more favourable opportunities for doing *then*, what we are disinclined to attend to *now*. But how does experience shew the fallacy of these hopes! In advancing years, while duties multiply, opportunities diminish; and persons who have neglected the favourable and unencumbered period of youth, will one day look back upon that

irrecoverable portion of life with keen and bitter regret.

A still more dangerous delusion in the survey of life, is calculating too confidently upon our own being prolonged to the utmost date. Because some attain to threescore years and ten, and some even totter a few paces further, we readily conclude, or at least sanguinely hope, that *we* shall be included in that small minority. And while fever and consumption are slaying their thousands and ten thousands, blasting the young and healthy on every side, and while sudden and unavoidable accidents are continually holding up their awful precedents, still, because any individual *may* escape them, how apt is he to conclude that he *shall*, and so to act upon that dangerous presumption !

How suitable, then, how necessary, is the language of the Psalmist ! Since, without help and influence from above, we, like the rest of mankind, must inevitably fall into the common delusion in attempting to number our days.

But it is not merely that we may acquire an habitual and apprehensive conviction of the brevity of life, that we should make this request. The important end to be answered by it is, "that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." And this means something more than applying ourselves to the outward forms and duties of religion. It means more than profession ; and more than that

sort of attention and application which does not at all interfere with worldly pleasures and interests. That which the *Scriptures* call wisdom, always implies a deep conviction of the value of the soul; of the necessity of salvation; and a consequent earnestness and diligence in securing it. Under *such* impressions we ask importunately that we may receive our *sight*; and behold with that truth and clearness which is peculiar to spiritual discernment, the limits of our mortal career, as well as the great concern which we have to transact in the course of it.

Then, standing, as it were, on an eminence of thought, we shall take a just and undisturbed survey of the path of life. Raised above the bustle, the distraction, the clouded atmosphere of earthly engagements, we shall look backward and onward, and measure the short passage that is conducting ourselves and our generation to Eternity. Such a view, wholly different from a vague and general acknowledgment of our mortality, is given to those who seriously ask for a serious mind; and the result of it will be more earnest desires, and more determined resolutions, that the short path which lies before us may be directed through the narrow way that leads to life. Then shall we indeed strive to enter at the strait gate; seeking to do so by the means of fervent, importunate prayer.

Requests like these are sometimes answered in

a manner unthought of by the persons who urge them. Those whose hearts still cling to life and earthly happiness, and who are prone to make sanguine calculations of their future years, are often taught *how* to number their days by the means of affliction. God touches some of the springs of life: health is blasted; and then, with a distinctness and vividness unknown before, we see that "the days of our years are few and evil." "It is good to be afflicted" when such purposes are answered by our trials. Our heavenly Father well knows what means to use in granting our requests for spiritual wisdom; and what will most effectually disperse the illusion and obscurity of our minds. Whatever these means may be, instead of shrinking from them, our interest is diligently to improve them.

The approaching season of the year is thought to render such reflections as the above suitable. There are many who think little of the flight of time on ordinary occasions, who will give a serious thought to this solemn subject at the close of a year, on a birth-day, or on the event of the death of any of their friends. But the experience even of a child will shew, how transient and ineffectual such impressions are, in themselves. Often "a fleeting hour is scarcely past," before they are completely effaced, and worldly things eagerly re-occupy the mind. Let a recollection of the inefficacy of former impressions, deeply convince every

reader who may have been the subject of them, of the absolute necessity of the aid of the Holy Spirit to render such thoughts abiding and influential. If David found the need of prayer in order that he might number his days to purpose, surely it must be the case with us. Let us then all join with deep seriousness in this petition; accompanied with a sincere purpose of heart, henceforward to apply our hearts to true wisdom.

XVI.

HOW IT STRIKES A STRANGER.

IN a remote period of antiquity, when the supernatural and the marvellous obtained a readier credence than now, it was fabled that a stranger of extraordinary appearance was observed pacing the streets of one of the magnificent cities of the east, remarking with an eye of intelligent curiosity every surrounding object. Several individuals ga-

thering around him, questioned him concerning his country and his business; but they presently perceived that he was unacquainted with their language, and he soon discovered himself to be equally ignorant of the most common usages of society. At the same time, the dignity and intelligence of his air and demeanour forbade the idea of his being either a barbarian or a lunatic. When at length he understood by their signs that they wished to be informed whence he came, he pointed with great significance to the sky; upon which the crowd concluding him to be one of their deities, were proceeding to pay him divine honours: but he no sooner comprehended their design than he rejected it with horror: and bending his knees and raising his hands towards heaven in the attitude of prayer, gave them to understand that he also was a worshipper of the powers above.

After a time, it is said, that the mysterious stranger accepted the hospitalities of one of the nobles of the city; under whose roof he applied himself with great diligence to the acquirement of the language, in which he made such surprising proficiency, that in a few days he was able to hold intelligent intercourse with those around him. The noble host now resolved to take an early opportunity of satisfying his curiosity respecting the country and quality of his guest; and upon his expressing

this desire, the stranger assured him that he would answer his inquiries that evening after sun-set. Accordingly, as night approached, he led him forth upon the balconies of the palace, which overlooked the wealthy and populous city. Innumerable lights from its busy streets and splendid palaces were now reflected in the dark bosom of its noble river; where stately vessels laden with rich merchandize from all parts of the known world, lay anchored in the port. This was a city in which the voice of the harp and of the viol, and the sound of the millstone were continually heard: and craftsmen of all kinds of craft were there; and the light of a candle was seen in every dwelling; and the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride were heard there. The stranger mused awhile upon the glittering scene, and listened to the confused murmur of mingling sounds. Then suddenly raising his eyes to the starry firmament, he fixed them with an expressive gaze, on the beautiful evening star which was just sinking behind a dark grove that surrounded one of the principal temples of the city. "Marvel not," said he to his host, "that I am wont to gaze with fond affection on yonder silvery star. That was my home; yes, I was lately an inhabitant of that tranquil planet; from whence a vain curiosity has tempted me to wander. Often had I beheld with wondering admiration, this brilliant world of yours,

ever one of the brightest gems of our firmament: and the ardent desire I had long felt to know something of its condition, was at length unexpectedly gratified. I received permission and power from above to traverse the mighty void, and to direct my course to this distant sphere. To that permission, however, one condition was annexed, to which my eagerness for the enterprise induced me hastily to consent; namely, that I must thenceforth remain an inhabitant of this strange earth, and undergo all the vicissitudes to which its natives are subject. Tell me therefore, I pray you, what is the lot of man; and explain to me more fully than I yet understand, all that I hear and see around me."

"Truly, Sir," replied the astonished noble, "although I am altogether unacquainted with the manners and customs, products and privileges of your country, yet methinks I cannot but congratulate you on your arrival in our world; especially since it has been your good fortune to alight on a part of it affording such various sources of enjoyment as this our opulent and luxurious city. And be assured it will be my pride and pleasure to introduce you to all that is most worthy the attention of such a distinguished foreigner."

Our adventurer, accordingly, was presently initiated in those arts of luxury and pleasure which were there well understood. He was introduced,

by his obliging host, to their public games and festivals; to their theatrical diversions, and convivial assemblies: and in a short time he began to feel some relish for amusements, the meaning of which, at first, he could scarcely comprehend. The next lesson which it became desirable to impart to him, was the necessity of acquiring wealth as the only means of obtaining pleasure. A fact which was no sooner understood by the stranger, than he gratefully accepted the offer of his friendly host to place him in a situation in which he might amass riches. To this object he began to apply himself with diligence; and was becoming in some measure reconciled to the manners and customs of our planet, strangely as they differed from those of his own, when an incident occurred which gave an entirely new direction to his energies.

It was but a few weeks after his arrival on our earth, when walking in the cool of the day with his friend in the outskirts of the city, his attention was arrested by the appearance of a spacious enclosure near which they passed; he inquired the use to which it was appropriated.

"It is," replied the nobleman, "a place of public interment."

"I do not understand you," said the stranger.

"It is the place," repeated his friend, "where we bury our dead."

"Excuse me, Sir," replied his companion, with some embarrassment, "I must trouble you to explain yourself yet further."

The nobleman repeated the information in still plainer terms.

"I am still at a loss to comprehend you perfectly," said the stranger, turning deadly pale. "This must relate to something of which I was not only totally ignorant in my own world, but of which I have, as yet, had no intimation in yours. I pray you, therefore, to satisfy my curiosity; for if I have any clue to your meaning, this, surely, is a matter of more mighty concernment than any to which you have hitherto directed me."

"My good friend," replied the nobleman, "you must be indeed a novice amongst us, if you have yet to learn that we must all, sooner or later, submit to take our place in these dismal abodes; nor will I deny that it is one of the least desirable of the circumstances which appertain to our condition; for which reason it is a matter rarely referred to in polished society, and this accounts for your being hitherto uninformed on the subject. But truly, Sir, if the inhabitants of the place whence you came are not liable to any similar misfortune, I advise you to betake yourself back again with all speed; for be assured there is no escape here;

nor could I guarantee your safety for a single hour."

"Alas," replied the adventurer, "I must submit to the conditions of my enterprise; of which, till now, I little understood the import. But explain to me, I beseech you, something more of the nature and consequences of this wondrous metamorphosis, and tell me at what period it most commonly happens to man."

While he thus spoke, his voice faltered, and his whole frame shook violently; his countenance was pale as death, and a cold dew stood in large drops upon his forehead.

By this time his companion, finding the discourse becoming more serious than was agreeable, declared that he must refer him to the priests for further information; this subject being very much out of his province.

"How!" exclaimed the stranger, "then I cannot have understood you;—do the priests only die?—are not you to die also?"

His friend evading these questions, hastily conducted his importunate companion to one of their magnificent temples, where he gladly consigned him to the instructions of the priesthood.

The emotion which the stranger had betrayed when he received the first idea of death, was yet slight in comparison with that which he experienced

as soon as he gathered from the discourses of the priests, some notion of immortality; and of the alternative of happiness or misery in a future state. But this agony of mind was exchanged for transport when he learned, that by the performance of certain conditions before death, the state of happiness might be secured; his eagerness to learn the nature of these terms, excited the surprise and even the contempt of his sacred teachers. They advised him to remain satisfied for the present with the instructions he had received, and to defer the remainder of the discussion till the morrow.

“How!” exclaimed the novice, “say you not that death may come at any hour!—may it not then come this hour:—and what if it should come before I have performed these conditions! Oh! withhold not this excellent knowledge from me a single moment!”

The priests suppressing a smile at his simplicity, then proceeded to explain their Theology to their attentive auditor; but who shall describe the ecstasy of his happiness when he was given to understand, that the required conditions were, generally, of easy and pleasant performance; and that the occasional difficulties or inconveniences which might attend them, would entirely cease with the short term of his earthly existence. “If then, I under-

stand you rightly," said he to his instructors, "this event which you call death, and which seems in itself strangely terrible, is most desirable and blissful. What a favour is this which is granted to me, in being sent to inhabit a planet in which I can die!" The priests again exchanged smiles with each other; but their ridicule was wholly lost upon the enraptured stranger.

When the first transports of his emotion had subsided, he began to reflect with sore uneasiness on the time he had already lost since his arrival.

"Alas, what have I been doing!" exclaimed he. "This gold which I have been collecting, tell me, reverend priests, will it avail me any thing when the thirty or forty years are expired which, you say, I may possibly sojourn in your planet!"

"Nay," replied the priests, "but verily you will find it of excellent use so long as you remain in it."

"A very little of it shall suffice me," replied he: "for consider, how soon this period will be past: what avails it what my condition may be for so short a season: I will betake myself from this hour, to the grand concerns of which you have charitably informed me."

Accordingly, from that period, continues the le-

gend, the stranger devoted himself to the performance of those conditions, on which, he was told, his future welfare depended; but in so doing, he had an opposition to encounter wholly unexpected, and for which he was even at a loss to account. By thus devoting his chief attention to his chief interests, he excited the surprise, the contempt, and even the enmity of most of the inhabitants of the city; and they rarely mentioned him but with a term of reproach, which has been variously rendered in all the modern languages.

Nothing could equal the stranger's surprise at this circumstance; as well as that of his fellow-citizens appearing, generally, so extremely indifferent as they did to their own interests. That they should have so little prudence and forethought as to provide only for their necessities and pleasures for that short part of their existence in which they were to remain in this planet, he could consider only as the effect of disordered intellect; so that he even returned their incivilities to himself, with affectionate expostulation; accompanied by lively emotions of compassion and amazement.

If ever he was tempted for a moment to violate any of the conditions of his future happiness, he bewailed his own madness with agonizing emotions: and to all the invitations ~~he~~ received from others to

do any thing inconsistent with his real interests, he had but one answer—" Oh," he would say, " I am to die!—I am to die!"

XVII.

NOW AND THEN.

IN distant days of wild romance,
Of magic mist and fable;
When stones could argue, trees advance,
And brutes to talk were able;
When shrubs and flowers were said to preach,
And manage all the parts of speech :

'Twas then, no doubt, if 'twas at all
(But doubts we need not mention)
That THEN and now, two adverbs small,
Engaged in sharp contention ;
But how they made each other hear
Tradition doth not make^{*} appear.

THEN, was a sprite of subtle frame,
With rainbow tints invested ;
On clouds of dazzling light she came,
And stars her forehead crested ;
Her sparkling eye of azure hue,
Seemed borrowed from the distant blue.

Now, rested on the solid earth,
And sober was her vesture ;
She seldom either grief or mirth
Expressed by word or gesture ;
Composed, sedate and firm she stood,
And looked industrious, calm and good.

THEN, sang a wild, fantastic song,
Light as the gale she flies on :
Still stretching, as she sailed along,
Towards the fair horizon ;
Where clouds of radiance, fringed with gold,
O'er hills of emerald beauty rolled.

Now, rarely raised her sober eye
To view that golden distance ;
Nor let one idle minute fly
In hope of THEN'S assistance ;
But still, with busy hands, she stood,
Intent on doing *present* good.

She ate the sweet but homely fare
That passing moments brought her ;
While THEN, expecting dainties rare,
Despised such bread and water :
And waited for the fruits and flowers
Of future, still receding hours.

Now, venturing once to ask her why,
She answered with invective ;
And pointed, as she made reply,
Towards that long perspective
Of years to come, in distance blue,
Wherein she meant to *live* and *do*.

*

“ Alas,” says she, “ how hard you toil !
With undiverted sadness :
Behold yon land of wine and oil—
Those sunny hills of gladness ;
Those joys I wait with eager brow : ”—
“ And so you always will,” said NOW.

“ That fairy land that looks so real,
Recedes as you pursue it ;
Thus while you wait for times ideal,
I take my work and do it ;
Intent to form, when time is gone,
A pleasant past to look upon.”

" Ah, well," said THEN, " I envy not
Your dull fatiguing labours ;
Aspiring to a brighter lot,
With thousands of my neighbours,
Soon as I reach that golden hill ;"—
" But that," says now, " you never will."

" And e'en suppose you should," said she
(" Though mortal ne'er attained it)—
Your nature you must change with me
The moment you had gained it :
Since hope fulfilled (you must allow)
Turns now to THEN, and THEN to now."

XVIII.

PSALM CVIII. 1.

" O God, my heart is fixed."

HAPPY is the individual who can adopt these words with sincerity, humility, and deliberation! Happy at any period of life; but, especially so if it be at its outset. How wise—how good—and how pleasant a thing it is to be steadfast in religion, may be partly judged of by the unhappiness of a wavering and halting profession. It is no uncommon thing for the heart to have certain inclinations, and wishes, and intentions towards piety: even a vain and worldly—a hard and selfish heart—may attain to this; and very often, under some sudden or violent impression, the language of the text has been employed by such a one. "Now at last," it may be said, "I am resolved. This illness, this danger, this disappointment, will surely never be forgotten; I will prepare, in earnest, for death, now that it has

been so near me:" or, "I will no longer love a world that has thus cruelly deceived me. But, how transient such resolutions as these commonly prove, even a short experience of the heart's deceitfulness is sufficient to testify.

The language of the text, as employed by the holy Psalmist, has a very different import. It seems to express the deliberate purpose of a devout and experienced mind—after having counted the cost—after taking fully into account the sacrifices that must be made, in order to a complete surrender of the heart to God—after calling to remembrance the snares and difficulties, the sins and sorrows, that he had brought upon himself in times past, when, in consequence of indecision, his feet were almost gone, and when his steps had well nigh slipped; when he went astray like a lost sheep," and when he had forfeited all the joys and comforts of religion. After such a serious and humbling retrospect as this, and with a lively impression of the infinite superiority of spiritual blessings to worldly good, of future happiness to present gratification; feeling, also, an entire dependance on divine strength to support his resolution, he fervently exclaims, "O God, my heart is fixed."

And now, what is the meaning, the essence, of this determination? To ascertain it, let us first inquire what is the real, though unavowed language of an *unfixed* heart? "I cannot at present decide," such

a one says, in effect, " which is best, whether to enjoy myself as much as I can for fifty or sixty years to come, and then for my body and soul to perish ' in everlasting burnings,' or whether to deny myself some present gratification, and then to be happy through eternity. I suspect that it is better to lose my soul by and by, rather than that one of my members should perish now ; at least I think I prefer (not gaining the whole world, because that is impossible) but to gain as much of it as I possibly can, to the trouble of saving my soul. At any rate I am willing to risk my eternal happiness upon the chance of my having time, and space, and willingness to repent in good time : at all events my heart is fixed in its inclination to cleave to the world at *present*. And in the mean time I hope that that which happens in all other cases will not happen to me, and that my heart will not become hardened by delay, nor my conscience seared by habit. I trust, also, that I shall escape all those violent diseases and sudden accidents which cut many off unprepared ; and that, although God has admonished us to be ready, ' because he will come in an hour when we think not,' yet, I hope he will give *me* a sufficient warning of his approach."

Now, although there are none, perhaps, who would deliberately use such language as this, yet let the delaying, halting, worldly mind, the trifler with his own soul, seriously reflect, for a while, upon the

real import of his conduct, and even of his thoughts and purposes in reference to religion, and inquire if they would prove to be very different from such cruel and desperate determinations as these. But, alas, that cool and serious reflection which this would imply, is the very thing which the worldly heart refuses, and from which the-indolent mind is sure to excuse itself.

By a careless reader of the Bible such a passage as the text, if it arrests a moment's thought, is considered, perhaps, as an expression very natural, and very proper to be used by the "holy men of old," who were religious in a degree that is not to be attained to now: at least the reader conceives he would be quite out of his sphere in attempting it. But after all, these words, if duly considered, imply nothing more than a wise determination on the part of the writer to pursue his highest interest from that time forward; and no longer to listen to those enemies of his soul, who would persuade him to seek his own ruin. It means no more than every one must resolve upon who would be saved. It is only the reverse of that dreadful and perilous state of mind that has been just reduced to plain language. It is safety opposed to danger—wisdom opposed to folly—perfect peace exchanged for tormenting fear—happiness for misery—Heaven for Hell.

If such be the case, can there be a doubt whether or not to make this language our own? But, perhaps,

the young reader may reply, "that he has often, as he thought, sincerely resolved upon a religious life, and really hoped that his heart was fixed in it; and, after all, it has proved to be so far otherwise, that the first light temptation has been sufficient to unsettle it; so that now he is afraid of appealing to God in this way any more." If it be so, let the complainer seriously inquire, Whether those unsuccessful acts of dedication were the result of sudden impulse, or of deliberate choice? Whether they were followed up by persevering prayer? Whether they were made with a due conviction of his own inability, and of the necessity of abiding in Christ, in order to do any good thing? Whether, especially, he has built on the right foundation of "repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ?"

Desires and purposes, ever so sincere, that come short of this, will never endure; they are built on the sand, and disappointment is inevitable. Perhaps the instability complained of may proceed from inexperience as to the nature of the Christian life. Young Christians may, at first, be discouraged when they discover that, from first to last, it is a warfare—a conflict—and not a state of rest and inaction. Yet, it is no strange thing; it is what they are given to expect, that after the great change has taken place, when God "wrought in them to will and to do of his good pleasure," they should still, and to

the end of life, have to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling"—with diligence, and patience, and anxiety. And it is no proof that the heart is not really fixed in its choice and preference of the good ways of God, that it is shaken for a time from its steadfastness.

But, whatever ill success and discouragement may have attended former resolutions, still there is but one course to be taken; namely, to repair afresh to the throne of mercy, and with increased humility and earnestness to ask for "more grace," and for that "sufficient strength" which enables the weak to do all things.

Still let your language be, "Whatever difficulties I may encounter, I am resolved to press forward: I have suffered enough already by indecision: have I not heretofore had some secret reserve, and given but half my heart to God, while the world had the remainder? But now I would make a full surrender. Now, I will, by his grace helping me, be more than ever diligent in the use of means, while I am less than ever confident in my own ability to persevere.—"O God, my heart is fixed, establish my goings in thy paths."

XIX.

THE PILGRIMAGE OF LEARNING.

THE temple of knowledge, that spacious and magnificent structure, towards which so many weary steps have been directed, appears at this moment a bright object in the distant horizon. The setting sun now illuminating its fair marble columns, reveals something of its elegance and splendour. Having pitched my tent beneath a spreading shade, in order to take needful repose, I have amused myself by noting down some of the adventures that befel me, more especially in the early part of my pilgrimage: although, being now advanced in years, and having commenced this adventure in early childhood, I retain but an imperfect remembrance of many circumstances, and can offer no more than a brief sketch of the journey.

Nothing could be more easy and agreeable than my condition, when I was first summoned to set

out on this career. Sporting upon flowery lawns, surrounded with glittering baubles, overwhelmed with caresses, and meeting smiles in every face. Strange was the hour when I was snatched from the midst of these indulgences, to commence a toilsome pilgrimage; though at that time little aware of the lengthened and difficult course that lay before me. It was not, however, without letting fall a few ominous tears that I set the first step. Several companions of my own age and condition accompanied me in the outset; and we travelled pleasantly together a good part of the way.

Our path, at first, lay through a ploughed field, which we no sooner entered than we were accosted by three diminutive strangers, who assumed a formidable aspect towards us. These we presently discovered to be the advanced guard of a Liliputian army, which was seen advancing towards us in battle array. Their forms were singularly grotesque; some were striding across the path, others standing with their arms akimbo, some hanging down their heads, other quite erect, some standing on one leg, others on two, and one, strange to say, on three; another had his arms crossed, and one was remarkably crooked, some were very slender, and others as broad as they were long. But notwithstanding this diversity of figure, when they were all marshalled in line of battle, they had a very orderly and regular appearance. Feeling disconcerted by their num-

hers, we were presently for sounding a retreat; but being urged forward by our guide, we soon mastered the three who led the van, and this gave us spirit to encounter the main army, who were conquered to a man before we left the field. We had scarcely taken breath after this victory, when, to our no small dismay, we descried a strong reinforcement of the enemy stationed on the opposite side. These were exactly equal in number to the former army, but vastly superior in size and stature; they were, in fact, a race of giants, though of the same species with the others, and were capitally accoutred for the onset. Their appearance discouraged us greatly at first; but we found their strength was not proportioned to their size; and having acquired much skill and courage by the late engagement, we soon succeeded in subduing them, and passed off the field in triumph. After this we were perpetually engaged with small bands of the enemy, no longer extended in line of battle, but in small detachments, of two, three, and four in a company; we had some tough work here, and now and then they were too many for us. Having annoyed us thus for a time, they began to form themselves into close columns, six or eight abreast; but we had now attained so much address, that they were no longer very formidable to us.

Notwithstanding these frequent skirmishes, we were on the whole, well pleased with our road. It

lay for the most part, through a verdant and flowery district, and we had many intervals of relaxation and repose.

After continuing this route for a considerable way, the face of the country suddenly changed, and we began to enter upon a vast succession of snowy plains, where we were each furnished with a certain light weapon, peculiar to the country, which we flourished continually, and with which we made many light strokes, and some desperate ones. The waters hereabouts were dark and brackish, and the snowy surface of the plain was often defaced by them. Probably we were now on the borders of the Black Sea. These plains we traversed across and across, for a many a day.

Upon quitting this district the country became far more dreary; it appeared nothing but a dry and sterile desert, the soil being remarkably hard and slaty. Here we saw many curious figures, but we soon found that the inhabitants of this desert were mere cyphers, sometimes they appeared in vast numbers, which were again suddenly diminished.

Our road, after this, wound through a rugged and hilly country, which was divided into nine principal parts or districts, each under a distinct governor; and these again were reduced into endless subdivisions. Some of them we were obliged to decline; it was not a little puzzling to perceive the intricate ramifications of the paths in these parts. Here,

the natives spoke several dialects, which rendered our intercourse with them very perplexing. However, it must be confessed, that every step we set in this country was less fatiguing and more interesting. Our course at first lay all up hill, and when we had proceeded to a certain height, the distant country, which was most richly variegated, opened finely to our view : and the atmosphere at this elevation was so clear, that we were able to discern several very remote countries, and were gratified with a distant view of many celebrated antiquities.

I must not, however, omit here to mention a circumstance which occasioned no little mortification and chagrin to some of our party. The hills we were now climbing were so lofty and romantic, and the prospects appeared to us so extensive, that several of us were of opinion, that ascending a few more heights would bring us to our journey's end ; and a gaudy and contemptible pagoda, that stood on a neighbouring summit, was actually mistaken by us for the temple of knowledge itself. Under this idea, many of our party rushed on with an air of triumph ; at the same time regarding with looks of great contempt, several parties of pilgrims whom we observed still patiently trudging along in the vallies below. Just as we were loudly congratulating ourselves on this speedy termination of our travels, and admiring the gay and superficial gilding that adorned this edifice, we were accosted by a venerable man, who,

having with a smile of pity disclosed to us our mistake, requested us to follow him, while he led us to the farthest summit of the hill ; where he desired us to observe a range of lofty mountains, which appeared like faint clouds in the distant horizon.

" Youths," said he, " believe me, it will be long ere you reach the nearest summit of that sublime range : perhaps the patience of some of you may be exhausted before you even approach their bases ; but be assured, that if you should attain that elevation, you will, even from thence only be able to gain a distant glimpse of the temple, which is situated on one of a far loftier and more remote chain. Be not disconcerted, you are not the first novices who have mistaken this glittering and tawdry place for that sublime structure ; some I have known who could never be persuaded of their error, but under the idea of having attained the end of their pilgrimage, have run in this low neighbourhood all their days. I, myself," continued he, " have been a pilgrim from my childhood, but have never been able to reach the desired goal. I have now retraced my steps for a considerable distance, and am waiting here the arrival of some zealous pilgrims from the vallies, whom I have undertaken to conduct by the nearest route, as far towards the temple as I am myself acquainted with the road."

Some of our number, ingenuously acknowledging our error, thanked the sage for his information ; while

others treated him as a conceited impostor. At this place a great variety of roads meet; and here it is usual for parties to disband, each individual taking that path which best suits his taste or convenience. I accordingly took an affectionate leave of my companions, with the lively hope mutually expressed, of meeting them all at length within the boundaries of the temple of knowledge.

The path I now chose was remarkably steep and difficult of ascent; yet it seemed to me the most inviting. I travelled chiefly by night, keeping my eye in an upward direction, and guiding my course by the motions of the heavenly bodies. This favourite track, with occasional deviations into lanes and meads belonging to the same district, I have continued to pursue to the present moment. The range of magnificent mountains, mentioned by our early director, now begins to present itself to my longing view, in broad lights and bold outlines, and as I mentioned above, the temple itself, situated on the loftiest of them all, is visible in a favourable atmosphere. But I now often call to mind the words of that venerable guide, and begin to entertain serious apprehensions that there is some, at present, impassable boundary, which divides the immediate vicinity of the temple from these lower regions. And should I, upon a nearer approach, find this to be the case, my intention is contentedly to take up my abode in some verdant valley at the base of the

mountain watered by a pure stream from the sacred height, which may allay my burning thirst, and invigorate my wearied spirits ; and I shall feel perfectly reconciled to this delay by two considerations ; first, that my past travels and labours would be well rewarded, if they had answered no other end than that of rectifying the mistaken ideas formed by those who never proceed far on this pilgrimage, with regard to the extent of the journey, and the actual situation of the edifice ; each one supposing it to be reared on some spot within the limits of his bounded horizon. And secondly, the full persuasion I entertain, that whenever I am summoned to ford the deep and dark stream which it is generally supposed surrounds the base of the mountains, I shall obtain easy and direct access to the most sacred recesses of the temple.

XX.

A LIBERAL TASTE.

MR. W- —, a gentleman of affluent fortune, who resided in the neighbourhood of a populous city, took a benevolent pleasure in encouraging young persons of merit and genius, by his attentions and assistance. He kept a hospitable table in the true sense of the word : that is, one that was oftener surrounded by deserving individuals rising from obscurity, or struggling with difficulties, than by persons of his own rank and consequence, from whom he might receive the same again. In addition to the generous motives which chiefly influenced him in so doing, he was glad of the opportunity of introducing his children to the society of persons from whom he rightly judged they would be more likely to learn something useful, and to be stimulated to exertion, than by the desultory discourse which commonly prevails in more polite parties.

One day, a small company, consisting chiefly of young men of the above description, was assembled at Mr. W——'s house. One of these had lately returned from a tour on the Continent, whither he had accompanied a young nobleman in the capacity of tutor. In the course of the excursion, he had made a collection of fossils and minerals, which he promised to exhibit this evening for the entertainment of Mr. W——'s children. The young man, who was devoted to his favourite study, expatiated on the various names, families, and properties of his specimens with a genuine enthusiasm, which prevented his perceiving that all the spectators were not equally interested. There was a pale youth, looking on from motives of complaisance, who evinced, sometimes by suppressed yawns, and sometimes by a half concealed smile, his entire distaste for, if not contempt of, the exhibition. This was a young poet.

"Is it possible," thought he to himself, "that a man of education should have gazed on Alpine scenery—have trod the classic ground of Italy and Greece—visited the very abodes of the muses, and wandered amid the magnificent ruins of antiquity—amid all that is immortalized by history and consecrated by poetry, to no other purpose than that of collecting a few shining pebbles and pieces of crumbling chalk!"

These reflections were interrupted by the inquiries

of another of the party, a rising artist, who when the geologist was shewing a particular species of marble, found near the ruins of the Coliseum at Rome, inquired whether he had visited the Vatican; and whether he was not infinitely gratified by the rare specimens of ancient and modern art, by which he was surrounded. The geologist replied, that he certainly was highly gratified, but added, that having for his own part little acquaintance with the arts, he could not, of course, derive that degree of gratification from what he saw, which others might have done; as well as that his time was so much occupied by that, which he confessed was his favourite pursuit, that he was unable to pay the attention to those things, which he was conscious they merited.

Here the poet and the artist exchanged a look; and when the exhibition was over, they entered into discussion on the comparative merits of painting and poetry; each warmly maintaining the superiority of his favourite study. The geologist took no share in the argument; but he looked chagrined that the conversation was so soon diverted from the subject most interesting to himself. One of the company, a gentleman who had been lately making some curious and successful experiments in chemistry, availed himself of a momentary pause in the discussion, to suggest the superior claims of scientific studies, compared with literature and the fine

arts; observing, that science must ever take the precedence, in point of utility, of those pursuits whose object is merely to address the imagination; and that a single discovery in natural philosophy must conduce more to the real benefit of mankind, than all the admired productions of wit and genius.

Upon this, the poet and the artist, forgetting their late disagreement, united their forces against the man of experiment; who, whatever might be the justness of his argument, was soon defeated by the eloquence of the poet, and the enthusiasm of the artist; each expatiating with more warmth than good breeding, on the very inferior kind and degree of genius (if genius it might be called) exercised in the patient researches of the naturalist, than is displayed by one masterly touch of the pencil or the pen.

Mr. W——, who was repeatedly appealed to on both sides, withheld any decided opinion, only occasionally interfering when the laws of fairness and candour seemed to be infringed. At a rather late hour the party broke up, each one, according to the common result of controversy, confirmed in his opinion, and strengthened in his prejudices.

The next morning, when Mr. W—— was surrounded by his children, the subject of the preceding evening was thus renewed by Edward.

Papa, why did you not say, last night, who

you thought in the right about poetry and philosophy?

FATHER. I wished rather to hear my young friends discuss the subject without restraint.

CHARLES. Well then, tell us now what you really think, for we have been arguing about it this morning, and we are each of a different opinion.

FATHER. Then, without inquiring what your opinions are, I can pronounce them to be all wrong ones.

CHARLES. How so, Papa?

FATHER. Suppose a company of artizans engaged in building a house, were to enter into a similar dispute respecting the comparative importance of their trades: carpenter and mason, *versus* painter, glazier, and paper hanger: what would you say to such a discussion?

EDWARD. I should think it a very ridiculous one, because all those trades are equally necessary in building a house, and making it comfortable.

FATHER. Very true; and yet it was not foolish but wise, in those different individuals to choose each for himself a particular craft, best suited to his inclination and circumstances. And you must observe, that the perfection to which the arts of life are brought in civilized countries, is owing to this very circumstance, the division of labour, or one man devoting all his time and ingenuity to one particular branch.

EDWARD. Then, why would it be ridiculous for them to maintain the superiority of their own trades?

FATHER. Because it would shew narrowness of mind, not to allow that other employments might be equally useful, necessary, and respectable with that particular one of which each had made choice. Now this want of liberality is much more inexcusable in men of education, because it is the very end and grand use of education, to enlarge and liberalize the views. And it is in fact found, that just in proportion to the extent and universality of a man's knowledge, is the candour and generosity of his mind, in estimating the attainments, and inspecting the pursuits of others. It is also one of the characteristics of true genius, to admire whatever is admirable, although in a sphere quite distinct from that of its own individual operations; it is interested in the achievements, and it sympathizes in the success of every species of human ingenuity. Our friends who were with us last evening, were most of them *young*; this must plead their excuse for the *bigotry* of their sentiments. Some of them also, though ingenious in their own departments, are but partially informed; having laboured under disadvantages in their early education: as they grow older, and acquire more knowledge, their taste will become less confined. To devote our chief attention to one

particular pursuit, best suited to our talents and opportunities, is the only way to success ; but then, whatever this pursuit may be, if we would aspire to the character of the philosopher, and of the gentleman, we must at the same time, furnish our minds with that general knowledge, which will lead us to allow their full value and importance to the studies of other men.

EDWARD. But papa, after all, must there not be a real difference in the importance of the arts and sciences? would not a country be much worse off, for instance, if there were no philosophers, than if there were no poets in it?

CHARLES. And yet I have heard papa say, that the very first step towards civilization in most countries, has been the cultivation of poetry and music.

FATHER. There are, beyond a doubt, some arts and some descriptions of knowledge more essential than others to the welfare of a country ; and yet this depends much more on the combination of all, than on the cultivation even of the most important : all therefore are deserving in this view, of equal respect. And while we may admit, that the taste of some men is of a nobler order than that of others, we must rejoice that all are not gifted with the most elevated, for in that case, I believe we should all starve upon star-gazing. But let us not after all, forget to remark, the vast difference between even an

exclusive and narrow devotedness to any one pursuit, and that want of real interest in any, which is far more prevalent in society. Believe me, my dear boys, that a man who is engaged in any of the most humble and insignificant researches of art or science, however low his station may be, is far more respectable, and unspeakably happier, than they who live only to eat, and drink, and dress, to take their pleasure, or to display their affluence. Among these persons indeed, we frequently meet with those who profess a general acquaintance with science; who have its nomenclature by rote, and who are far more ready and voluble in using the cant terms of art, than those who are really devoted to it. Yes, there is a thing more despicable than even voluntary ignorance; I mean the affectation of taste and knowledge—a pretension to admire and to understand the works of genius, without a spark of genuine feeling or of true taste. The utmost extravagance of enthusiasm in a favourite pursuit, is beyond comparison preferable to this.

EDWARD. Describe true taste to us, papa, in a few words.

FATHER. That would require some thought. However, we might generally say of it, that while it will stoop to inspect and to admire the most minute and laborious operations of ingenuity, and while it feels an interest and sympathy in every branch of knowledge, it returns with a natural bias

towards that which is most comprehensive in science, most intellectual in art, and most sublime in nature.

XXI.

HEBREWS XI. 1.

" Now faith is the substance of things hoped for ; the evidence of things not seen."

OF all classes and descriptions of persons on this earth, they are the happiest of whom it may be said, that the things most hoped for by them are the things not seen : and the reason why there is so much discontent and disappointment in the world is, that the reverse of this is generally the case. Things unseen are rather the objects of fear than of hope ; while our chief desires are fixed on the uncertain and unsatisfying objects of sense.

When persons profess a belief in, and hope of the future state—in a state of everlasting happiness, and

at the same time always shrink and tremble, and manifest only reluctance and dislike at the thought of entering upon it, have they not reason to suspect that their faith is not genuine? since true faith is described in Scripture as relating to things not feared and shunned, but desired and hoped for. And although the natural love of life, our social ties to earth, the terrors of death, the horrors of the grave, and the awful expectation of entering upon an unknown state, may be allowed to make us sometimes

“start and shrink
To cross the narrow sea;”

yet, since we profess to believe that the sting of death and the victory of the grave are both destroyed, and that the enjoyments and society of heaven are infinitely superior to what we now possess, there is reason to fear that worldliness of mind is the chief cause, where the thought of death is *habitually* disagreeable. It is certain, at least, that religion never flourishes—cannot have attained that degree which may warrant the expectation of an *abundant* entrance into life, except in the case of those who have their warmest affections and most lively hopes fixed on the heavenly world. Is it not, then, essential to our present comfort and future happiness, to become possessed of such a faith? especially as “without it,” we are assured, “it is

impossible to please God." We cannot imagine that He will regard with complacency that languid belief in His "great and precious promises," which produces no other effect in us than a vague and trembling hope that we shall not everlastingly perish. If we value the joys of heaven so lightly—think so little of the mansions in our Father's house, and of the preparations which our Lord is gone to make, is there not reason to apprehend that we have no true taste for the spiritual entertainments above; and that if ever we would arrive there, we must attain more meetness for heaven? Now there are means to be used for this good end; and it is in the season of youth, when there is especial need, and especial encouragement to employ such means. There is great *need* to do so, because it is then that the objects of sense present themselves to the view in a thousand illusions, which greatly increase their enchantment. It is then that things are hoped for with such undue eagerness, which, when possessed, wholly disappoint expectation. It is then that it is so difficult to believe that unseen and spiritual objects are really more worthy of affection.

But notwithstanding this, there is also great encouragement in youth to cultivate a spiritual taste: if the profitable practice of heavenly meditation be acquired early in life, the thoughts will ever after flow with comparative ease and pleasure in that delightful channel; and if the thoughts are much in

heaven, the conversation will be there also. The vivid imagination and warm affections of youth are favourable to the contemplation of sublime and spiritual objects. Although it will be ever needful carefully to distinguish between poetic or intellectual, and holy and spiritual thoughts of the world to come.

“This,” says the apostle, “is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.” Much of the opposition that we make to our spiritual enemies is not of a nature to succeed: we may very seriously reason and remonstrate with ourselves against sinful indulgences, and form strong resolutions against particular temptations, to which, notwithstanding, we yield again and again. This is discouraging: and we know not what to do. Every seriously disposed young reader will be aware of such difficulties as these. Let us then attend to the advice of St. Paul on this subject.—“Walk in the Spirit,” he says, “and ye shall not fulfil the desires of the flesh.” That is, instead of vainly attempting to combat our depraved inclinations towards inferior objects, we should pre-occupy our thoughts and affections with those that are spiritual. It is with idle minds as with idle hands, “Satan always finds some mischief” for them: but if they are pre-engaged with profitable thoughts, and refined by sublime contemplations, they are much less exposed to evil influence. Besides, this passage is by some

considered as a promise, that if we walk in the Spirit, and endeavour to maintain a holy and heavenly frame of mind, we shall be preserved from the power of temptation by Him "who is able to keep us from falling."

"Could we but climb where Moses stood," or could we ascend with St. Paul to the third heaven, and see, in vision, unutterable glories, there can be no doubt but we should be effectually convinced of the inferiority of earthly good. Now a lively faith overcomes the world just in this way: it affords us such an evidence of things unseen, so shews us the substance of things hoped for, that we need not that the heavens should be rent to reveal the celestial world to our sight, and to convince us of its superiority to present things. We believe God; we give full credit to his assurances concerning what he has prepared for those that love him; so that if one should rise from the dead, the persuasion would not be stronger.

What an encouragement to faith is that word of its great Author—"Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed!" "*And yet*," he says, intimating that he fails not mercifully to take into the account the difficulties and hindrances to faith which the infirmities of human nature put in our way: he remembers that we are dust; he knows there is a veil of flesh upon our hearts; so that it is no easy attainment for us to believe in things of

which our senses can take no cognizance. But blessed are they who have conquered these difficulties; who, having earnestly sought, have obtained spiritual discernment. We justly consider those individuals peculiarly favoured who saw and conversed with our Lord; yet there are, it seems, in some respects, superior advantages enjoyed by those whose mortal eyes have never beheld him. The disciples had not the opportunity of honouring God by so strong a faith as we, who simply trust his word; who, not having seen, believe and love. James, Peter, and John, who were with him on the holy mount, and there saw his glory—who met with some of the blessed society—saw the heavenly apparel white and glistening, and heard the celestial discourse—what could they do but believe, and acknowledge that he was the Son of God? But we, who have not this kind of demonstration, but admit the sure evidence of faith, thereby “obtain this testimony, that we more especially please God.”

When our hopes are fixed on any earthly scheme, how continually is that project the subject of our thoughts; whenever they are for a season diverted from it by unavoidable engagements, how naturally they return again to the favourite idea! Is it possible to hope and wish much for any thing of which we rarely think, or think only with reluctance? Let the experience of the youngest reader answer the question. By this test, then, we may safely judge

whether we have any genuine desires for spiritual blessings; whether or not our hopes and affections are really fixed on heavenly objects. "If we are indeed risen with Christ, we shall seek those things which are above;" and they will be the subjects of our frequent and favourite contemplation. If we are conscious that this is not our experience, let us remember, that "faith is the gift of God;" and let it be our instant concern to implore him, with ceaseless supplication, to "help our unbelief," that we may henceforth possess a lively evidence of things unseen, and have our highest hopes fixed upon them.

XXII.

THE LOVER OF EASE.

IN a dirty, ruinous looking house, that stood in one of the back streets of a smoky town, there lived an elderly man of the name of Smith. Very few people knew, and fewer cared any thing about

him; yet it was impossible to pass his abode without noticing the broken window panes, mended with paper, or stuffed with rags; the wretched courtyard, overgrown with nettles, and bestrewed with fragments of earthenware; the appearance of the whole bespeaking the sloth and misery of the owner. Smith himself was not often visible, but occasionally he might be seen on a sun-shiny morning, leaning with his arms folded over the pales of his yard, basking in the heat, like his old tabby cat. And sometimes on a dark evening, his long, lean, shabby figure might be discerned hovering over a handful of fire in his rusty grate. It is true, that there are in every town individuals equally wretched and comfortless; and it is also true, that in most, if not in every instance of the kind, there is more of fault than of misfortune. But, in the case of Smith, it is worthy of record, that he was a man remarkable for his relish for the good and agreeable things of life. Though he was wretched, he had certainly no taste for wretchedness; though he was destitute of pleasure, pleasure was the thing he most desired. From his early childhood, his love of gratification was so great, that whenever an opportunity offered he never failed to avail himself of it, whether to do so were right or wrong, in season or out of season, he would deny himself no enjoyment *then*; by which means he is denied every enjoyment *now*. So improvident are the indulgent, even in

scorning the very things that are most valued by them!

Smith was apprenticed to an honest trade, and he wanted not ability to become more than ordinarily expert in it. But whenever his master's back was turned, he thought it more agreeable to gossip over the fire with his fellow apprentices, to crack a pocket full of nuts, to play a game of whist, to read a dirty novel, or even to sit resting his head on his hands over the bench, than to go on with his work. Thus, at the end of seven years, he left his master with an imperfect knowledge of his business, an indifferent character, and, worse than all, desultory and idle habits.

Now, if he had but so far denied himself while he was an apprentice, as to have applied diligently to his business, he might have earned money enough as a journeyman to procure him all those comforts and enjoyments of which he was so fond. But instead of this, he was obliged to get work at low wages, when and where he could; so that he was poor, though he hated poverty, and he that was so fond of dainty fare had many a scanty meal.

Smith was fond of company, and had amongst his other partialities, a strong love of praise. He would not deny himself, when any opportunity offered, the pitiful pleasure of fishing for a compliment, and of saying those little things to his own advantage, which always proved in fact to be to his own disad-

vantage. Thus amongst the most severe denials to which his want of self-denial exposed him, were the perpetual mortifications which vanity is sure to encounter. Instead of being admired, Smith was ridiculed and pitied by his most discerning acquaintance; and as he was poor, they took no pains to conceal their contempt.

Having, as before hinted, read a great many worthless novels during his apprenticeship, his indolent mind was often occupied in the injurious habit of *castle-building*. There was no handsome and gallant chevalier in old romance, no elegant and accomplished hero of modern tale, with whom this meagre, thread bare, and dirty journeyman, would not at times identify himself; "Who knows," he would often think, "but I may one day happen of good luck: some do, and why should not I!" Those persons have always the highest expectations from luck, who are least disposed to make use of their cunning. The many hours in every week that poor Smith sat dreaming over his hopes and his wishes for prosperity, would have done a great deal, well employed, to help him out of adversity. . But it was much easier, he thought, to sit still and wish for wealth and honour, than to work hard for competence and credit. At any rate, he would not, or, as he thought, he could not deny himself this unprofitable amusement. . Besides, he knew very well that the

utmost diligence in his business would do no more than enable him to live with credit and comfort in his present rank of life; and that did not at all meet the ideas of one who was so familiar with great names, and high life, as are all readers of fiction; so he preferred to wait for the incalculably small chances of fortune, rather than to accept the certain rewards of industry. He thought the outside of a palace better than the inside of a cottage.

Every one who loves pleasure, knows how indispensable health is to the enjoyment of it: yet those who most value their ease, are generally the least careful in preserving it. Little acts of indulgence commonly introduce strong habits of intemperance. Thus Smith quickly lost one of the great advantages of honest poverty—health. Surely it must have been a great denial to one who was so fond of pleasure, to be always in pain! He had better have denied himself.

It would not have been an easy thing to have persuaded Smith in his youth, to commence a life of austerity, and submit to the rigours of a monastic rule. Yet, it may well be questioned whether the hardships, denials, and mortifications to which his want of self-denial exposed him, were not less tolerable than those he would in that case have endured. For is not abstinence to be preferred to hunger? penance to pain? retirement to obscurity? conceal-

ment to contempt? Is there then, much to choose between the wretched Smith in his ruinous tenement, and a monk in the cloisters of La Trappe?

But how many people live in comfort and credit, who are yet little practised in the art of self-denial. If indulgence *always* reduced one to wretchedness and contempt, there would be nothing to be said for it. Nor is there any thing to be said for it, although the degrees of outward misery to which it subjects individuals are various. It is truly remarked by Dr. Johnson, that "in proportion as we consult our ease, we part from happiness;" yes, in *exact* proportion. It is not necessary to be dirty, ragged, hungry, solitary and despised, in order to be uncomfortable. A man, reclining on the softest couch, in the most splendid apartments in the kingdom, surrounded with obsequious attendants, and pampered with every delicacy, may be pretty nearly as devoid of comfort as poor Smith in his miserable house. Few persons are more uneasy than they who are *quite at ease*.

If then, the indulgent and pleasure loving had but a little more fore-thought and consideration, they would become self-denying, out of mere selfishness; from a conviction that round about is the nearest way to happiness.

How happy are they who, from better motives than their own immediate gratification, have learned to take up daily, the light cross; to bring every

thought, word, and action, into captivity and holy obedience ; and who thus reap the large benefit of present comfort, and satisfaction, with the good hope of an eternal reward !

XXIII.

JEREMIAH III. 4.

' Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth ?'

WHEN we are tempted to entertain hard and injurious thoughts of our heavenly Father, such as our own evil hearts, and the suggestions of Satan incline us to form—when we are ready to suppose him a rigorous and austere master, reaping where he has not sown ; or a vindictive judge, delighting more in vengeance than in mercy—surely it should overwhelm us with grief and shame to call to mind any of those numerous passages of Scripture in which

He condescends to use the language of affectionate expostulation, and tender persuasion, to sinners of every degree.

Are there not those who form a tacit excuse for their continued neglect of religion, by indulging such false and unscriptural ideas of our most compassionate and merciful Father?—As though He would be more displeased by their presuming to accept salvation, than by their continuing to neglect and refuse it. This proud and hostile state of mind must be peculiarly offensive to Him, who dwells and delights in the humble and contrite spirit. It is a temper common to our fallen nature, and is more or less indulged by all sinners before they are persuaded to “venture on His grace.” But an affecting appeal, like that in the text, has broken many a stout heart, and brought down the high thoughts that had exalted themselves against the knowledge of God. May all who now read it feel assured that God is willing and ready to be a guide and, a father, *even to them!*

“Wilt thou not from *this time?*”—There are some occasions when this encouraging inquiry is pressed upon the heart and conscience with more than usual urgency; such as those periodical seasons when we are wont to meditate on the quick passage of life—on recovery from illness—on escape from danger—when changes have taken place in outward circumstances, and even (as the connexion

of the text fully warrants us to conclude) after having deeply fallen into temptation, and when the conscience is most heavily burdened with sin. Then, instead of those denunciations of wrath, which are reserved for a state of final impenitency, hear how the Lord pitieth his children !—"Wilt thou not from *this time* cry, My Father?"

But how many excuses are our hearts ready to make; how many specious arguments are brought forward against an immediate answer to this appeal! Any time but *this time* we are ready to say; but when are we as much in earnest in our desires as God is in his invitations?—none but the present time will suffice us. Amongst these vain excuses, one, not very uncommon, is a mistaken idea that we must wait God's time for enlightening our minds, and bringing us to himself. This is no other than a device of our great enemy, to induce us to delay those endeavours, and neglect those means, which, he knows, if persevered in, would issue in our eternal happiness. When we search the Scriptures, we find that the whole tenor of them discountenances such a notion. Although it is true that God must work in us every good thing, yet we are, at the same time, commanded to "work out our own salvation;" and all his great and precious promises are connected with our praying for the performance of them. "*Ask and ye shall receive;*" God is rich unto all that *call* upon him. So that we have no reason to expect

that he will aid us by his good Spirit, unless we continually and fervently implore Him to do so. Here, in the text also, we are required to *call* upon God to be our father and our guide, otherwise, it is plainly implied, that he will never fulfil those gracious offices towards us. But how exceedingly encouraging it is to know, that he is *waiting* to be thus gracious, and that none who apply will be sent empty away !

• A more frequent cause, with many, of backwardness and delay in seeking God, is the sense they entertain of the worldliness and vanity of their hearts, so that they are tempted to consider it almost hopeless for them to attempt to become religious in earnest—so many are the difficulties within and without. But then, they should remember that the great work of turning an evil and vain mind from sin to holiness, from earth to heaven, is not to be effected by our own power or might; we are not required to do it. Our encouragement is this—that “to God all things are possible,” and he is not only able, but willing, to make this vast change in every heart that is sincere in requesting him to do so. “A new heart,” he says, “I will give you, and a right spirit I will put within you;” but, observe, it is added, “for all these things I will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.” We must all lie down in despair if it were not for these promises: but since we have them, and from God, who

cannot lie, why should we not joyfully, and immediately avail ourselves of the amazing benefit which they hold out? Let it not be supposed that these invitations are given to those who are already partly righteous. No, they are made, as the Scriptures assure us, to those who are at present "far from righteousness," and even to "the stout hearted." Those who are worldly, vain, destitute of any taste for spiritual pleasures, and quite helpless, these are the persons whom God condescends to invite, and to "beseech to be reconciled to himself through Jesus Christ." What can any reader require more to encourage him, *from this time*, to cry unto God as his father?

Some find an excuse for their delay in the fear that if they should make a prompt and decided profession of religion, they should but disgrace it, for want of perseverance in the good way, and for want of strength to resist temptation, and so the last error would be worse than the first. But this is *only* an excuse; for we are assured that the same grace that enables us to begin a new course, will, in the use of the same means, strengthen us to hold on in it.

Many more objections might be mentioned and refuted, which, like stumbling blocks, we are ever ready to place in our own way. But, after all, if we do but set ourselves seriously and frequently to reflect upon the vast importance of the subject, if we do but consider the value of our souls, we shall not

suffer any, nor all of them, to hinder us from pressing in through the strait gate, nor from keeping on in the narrow way. How soon will this life be over! so soon, that if we could gain the whole world—if every wish of our hearts were to be fully gratified—and if those things that are inconvenient and disagreeable to us were to be immediately removed, what would it all profit? But life, at the best, abounds with disappointment, and weariness, and dissatisfaction: when we attain what we so earnestly desired we feel much less delight in it than we had expected, and begin to think of some new object to satisfy our restless wishes. Thus end the world's promises—not so those of God. Secret satisfaction is experienced by true Christians, even here, in the sense of his favour, and in a good hope for the future; and happiness beyond our power to conceive is treasured up for them in heaven.

It is necessary, however, to guard against unfounded expectations of immediate rest, peace, and enjoyment as soon as we begin in earnest to seek God. We are not to suppose that every thing will be granted to us the moment we cry to him as our father. Nor should this discourage us. Real religion is a gradual work, dim at first, but growing brighter and brighter to the last: while a false profession will make a great show at the beginning, and then gradually die away.

There is no instance in which the insufficiency of language, and the weakness of every human means of persuasion, is so sensibly felt as when we endeavour to arouse each other to a due attention to religion. What words can paint the importance of salvation!—What mind can conceive the terrors of refusing it!—God only comprehends the subject, and he tells us, “we *must* be born again;” for if this change do not take place upon us, it were “better for us we had never been born.” May God teach us the value of our souls, and convince us of the emptiness of all those excuses for delay with which Satan furnishes our lingering and reluctant minds!

XXIV.

THE MOTH.

A MILD September evening—twilight already stealing over the landscape, shades yonder sloping corn-field, whence the merry reapers have this day borne away the last sheaf. A party of gleaners have since gathered up the precious fragments. Now all are gone; the harvest moon is up; a low mist rising from the river floats in the valley. There is a gentle stirring amongst the leaves of the tall elm that shades our roof—all besides is still.—The grey and quiet scene invites reflection.

Wishing the reader to participate in our meditations, we were in the very act of committing to paper some sage considerations on the departure of another summer—but a very small and elegant moth, attracted by the candles, has this moment descended on the sheet, within an inch of our pen, and with the light stroke of his wing has broken our thread of

thought—will the reader excuse it if it break his also?

The delicacy and perfection of its form, the exquisite lace-work of its airy wing, its swift and noiseless movements, a body nearly as ethereal and unincumbered as if it were a soul, its independence, its innocence, awaken admiration—and (contrasted with the inertness and languor with which our cumbrous frames are often oppressed) might excite envy too.

Who can guess what are its imaginings concerning the extensive plain on which it has just arrived? Is it a field of dazzling light, an enchanted region of pleasure and brightness? He flutters his wings as though his dreams of joy were at length realized. From the dun shades of the evening without, he has suddenly launched into a new world of magic splendour, illumined with radiant suns. How little does he think (of this at least we may be sure) that this shining plain is no other than a sheet of foolscap!—that those glorious suns are inglorious candles!—such are the illusions of moths!

It would be very desirable, some young reader may think, if it were possible, to undeceive him; and supposing him capable of understanding it, to rectify all his mistakes, by addressing him in some such language as this:—"You are only a *moth*; and you have no idea what insignificant things moths are! you know nothing at all: you can't imagine what an astonishing number of things there are that

you have not even heard of. *We* think nothing of you; *we* are really of importance; but you are of no importance, you are only an insect. You sometimes do us mischief by eating holes in our clothes, and very tiresome it is that such little creatures as you should be able to do *us* mischief: having this opportunity, I must desire you not to do so any more, for what you eat is not at all nice; it is cloth, not food; why should you eat *cloth*? I wish you would mention this to all your relations: and as to the place that you now are upon, it is nothing in the world but a sheet of paper that a person is writing on: but you don't know what writing means, I dare say; indeed it is no use talking to you, you are so extremely ignorant, moth."—With a few variations, how suitable would be such an address to some things that are *not* moths! And to beings a little higher than ourselves in the scale of reason, how similar to those of the moth must appear the illusions of men? How many of the objects of our ardent pursuit are as destitute of intrinsic excellence, as empty of happiness as *we* know the glare of the light to be in which an insect so joyously flutters its wing! It does not, indeed, require the intellect of an angel to know this—experience teaches it, at last, even to dull scholars.—Children can laugh at the folly of an insect; youths soon learn to ridicule the toys and sports of children; men smile at the vanities of youth; wise men at the pleasures of weak men—and

not seldom at their own; while angels look down with surprise and pity on all—smiling most at the mistakes of the man, and least at those of the moth!

Fortunately enough for our moral, the little hero of the piece has this moment expired in the flame of the candle, and that in spite of the most praiseworthy exertions on our part to deter him from the rash adventure. In vain we whisked our quill in every dissuasive attitude; (an employment, by the way, to which we are but too much accustomed) he was resolved—and could he have given utterance to his feelings, no doubt he would have expressed his certain persuasion that it must be a desirable and a delightful thing to sport in that elegant flame. Who can witness this common catastrophe without observing the analogy, and reading the oft-told moral? Even if it had not scorched a single feather, if he could have lived there, still, we could assure him, he could not *find happiness in a candle*. He would have been a thousand times more comfortable, as well as more safe, hid in the dark folds of the curtain, or fixed within the protection of some broad shadow on the wall, or in any of the natural and customary haunts of his species. So is it with all unsanctioned pleasures; even if they were not dangerous they would be disappointing—but we know they are both the one and the other.

How quickly was that most complete and delicate

machine destroyed ! an engine which not the united sagacity and ingenuity of man could restore ! No wonder that so fine and fragile a creature should be liable to swift destruction :—but let not the strong glory in their strength, for behold, “ *we are crushed before the moth.*”

THE MOTH'S SONG.

Ah ! what shall I do,
To express unto you
What I think, what I feel, what I know and pursue !

With my elegant face,
And my wing of lace, .
How lightly the motes of the evening I chase !

Though I am but a moth,
And feed upon cloth,
To me it is pleasant and nourishing both.

And this region of light,
So broad and so bright,
It makes my heart dance with a strange delight !

If dismal to you,
'Tis the best of the two,
For O ! it is pleasant, this wide-shining view !

There are lights afar,
More bright than a star,
You say they are candles—I'll see if they are.

I go, and I fly,
And so good bye !—
Ah me ! what is it ?—I die ! I die !

XXV.

WINTER EVENINGS.

AT the present season of the year, when by many an oblique glance, and shy look, the retiring sun intimates his intention of keeping up the old custom this winter, we console ourselves for his shortening visits by anticipating the pleasures and advantages

peculiar to the time of his withdrawment. Not all the charms of summer's evening, under its most lovely aspect, can produce more pleasurable emotions than the fire-side comforts of a winter's night. Indeed, to the domestic taste and manners of the sober English, it has appropriate attractions:—while our sprightly neighbours across the channel, whose happiness lies more out of doors, may regret the departure of the time when, “in the shade of an elm, to the sound of a reed,” they dance away their merry summers; we find in winter such a balance of comfort and advantage as fully reconciles us to its approach; and which leads those who reflect upon it to admire the goodness of Him, who, sitting in the circle of the heavens, rolls round “the varied year,” and by the continual change of the seasons, has so admirably consulted the tastes, the duties, and even the restlessness of man.

“ Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.”

But ere the shutters close, and the curtains fall, may we not be allowed to take a peep at some of these happy domestic circles illumined by the animating blaze? It is a pleasure even to think of the many, many comfortable parlours in England that exhibit such a family picture every night. There

behold the busy work-table where the improving book circulates from hand to hand—the lively conversation, and the sweet interchange of the charities of social life.—These are the favourite haunts of happiness, and the nurseries of the private virtues, especially where peace and piety, taste and intelligence combine to grace the scene. And those whose “lines are fallen in such pleasant places,” should, indeed, give thanks to God for ‘so favoured a lot.

A large majority of our readers, we presume, are enjoying the privileges of a parental home, and belong to that class of society whose condition the Bible itself has decided to be the most favourable to happiness—those to whom is given “neither poverty nor riches.” It is into the apartments of *this* class of persons that we are just now venturing to glance, and such the readers whose attention we beg leave to invite. For, through the opening of the curtains we could fancy we espy on many a table, the yellow cover of a little pamphlet, which we readily enough conclude to be “the Youth’s Magazine,” and, under this persuasion, proceed to address the respective assemblies.

Having already congratulated them on their happy and favourable circumstances, we would next remind them of the possibility of so neglecting, if not abusing their privileges, that the long

succession of winter evenings now before them may, after all, be but unprofitably passed. Listlessness of body and of mind, frivolity, carelessness, or desultory habits, may render the advantages of retirement, leisure, and intelligent friends, so far useless, that the present season may escape with as little improvement to such individuals, as all the former precious winters and summers of their past lives. There is one very encouraging circumstance respecting the evenings of the approaching winter, on which we may, without exception, congratulate every one of our readers, let their circumstances or prospects be what they may: I mean that they are, for the most part, yet *to come*—an advantage, be it remembered, of which a very few months will deprive us. The first moist, mild, and bright spring evening that surprises us with the conviction that the winter is really gone, will be pleasant or painful in proportion to the manner in which we have spent it. Let us at once so begin to employ it, as to ensure agreeable and self-approving reflections for that time! Who amongst our readers will be so happy as to be able, with modest satisfaction, then to say, “*I have improved the past season; I have made some solid acquirements; added to my little stock of knowledge; strengthened my habits of thought; made some progress in the social virtues, and grown, in some degree, in Christian grace and knowledge?*”

What a happy winter will such have passed! and this happiness it is now within the power of every one to ensure.

But there may be some, even of *our* readers, who are looking forward to their winter evenings with feelings widely different from these. The pleasant parties, large and small, the long succession of Christmas visits, are the attractions that give brilliancy to the dull aspect of winter to many a youthful eye. And it is readily granted, that an occasional interchange of friendly visits amongst an intelligent circle of friends, is *one* of the real pleasures of winter evenings. But this, in itself so desirable, is not always restrained within moderate limits: and it cannot be doubted, that where the employments and duties of home are continually broken in upon (though by the best society) no successful progress will be made in what is most important to our welfare and happiness. It is to little purpose to spend the morning in useful pursuits, if in the evening the thoughts are always to be dissipated and distracted in a mixed company. Associating with agreeable friends is of all *recreations* the most delightful; but when, from its frequency, it becomes a sort of business rather than a recreation, the good is overbalanced by a thousand evils: and if this be the case, even with improving society, what must be the effect of incessant visiting with the giddy, volatile, and dissipated, or with

gossiping and censorious acquaintances? It is then to *evenings at home* that we more particularly refer, as seasons capable of affording true pleasure and improvement.

Although it must be admitted that young people, enjoying parental protection and instruction, are in the most favoured circumstances, yet there are advantages, and comforts too, peculiar to every condition.

That long range of lighted windows, where the confused din of voices and of machinery indicates the close and crowded manufactory, forms, indeed, a strange contrast with the quiet, orderly, and comfortable parlours into which we have just been intruding. Yet what thousands in England will pass their evenings as well as their mornings here! The air is bad, the work hard, and the wages low; yet even here is many a heart as light as any in the gayest assemblies. Here they enjoy the grand prerogative of honest labour, that of losing the present sense of their real troubles in their engrossing employments; and they are far too busy and too necessitous to be disturbed with imaginary ones. In these respects how oftener is the *weaver* happier than the *wearer*! Then we might think of the little crowded back rooms in every town and many a street, where circles of young females are plying the busy needle, often alas! till long *past* evening; pre-

paring the gay attire of those who are by no means so much happier than the makers, as both parties perhaps may imagine. In such situations as these, if the fear of God and a desire of mutual improvement should prevail, the laborious hours might pass with pleasure and profit, in addition to the cheerfulness which ever, in a greater or less degree, attends on honest industry.

It is not our intention to enumerate all the different modes in which winter evenings may be spent, but there is one which must not be omitted—the manner of spending sabbath evenings. This is indeed an important and valuable portion of our time; and O, how much depends on its right improvement!

Thousands and tens of thousands of the young will pass this hour at the crowded lecture. How many a serious appeal, solemn warning, and affectionate invitation, will sound in their ears on these occasions, during the present winter! But there are in some cases peculiar temptations to levity and vanity of mind in evening lectures, and therefore a double concern should be felt by those who attend them, to improve the instruction and to avoid the danger; remembering that there is nothing so hardening to the heart, so benumbing to the conscience, as the indulgence of a light temper of mind under the quickening means of grace. Happier, we think,

are they whose opportunities admit of dividing the evening of that day between family and private devotions. What progress might be made in the heavenly road, in the course of this winter, by a diligent improvement of those precious seasons! This is the hour for joyous contemplation on the life to come; for deep meditation; for close self-examination; for an improvement of the past engagements of the day; for fervent importunate prayer.

Should these hints induce any of our readers to set a higher value on this portion of their time, and to make a more diligent improvement of it, we shall not regret having employed one of our own winter evenings in suggesting them.

XXVI.

2 CORINTHIANS VI. 2.

"Behold now is the accepted time."

THERE is no subject connected with religion more frequently insisted on than the folly and danger of *delay*. But, however trite the topic, no apology can be required for its introduction, while the folly is still, in any instances, allowed, and while the danger continues to be incurred. The persons most inexcusable in such conduct, are those whose judgments are already informed in the truths of Christianity, and who admit a change of heart to be necessary, at some period of their lives, in order to their escaping future punishment; but who, notwithstanding this conviction, put off the dreaded effort to what they vainly hope will prove a more convenient season. Is there not reason to fear, that in what is called the religious world, there are multitudes, of every age, who would answer to this description?

Amongst the various fallacies, by means of which such persons endeavour to pacify their consciences, and by which they maintain a degree of tranquillity under such extremely perilous circumstances, the most usual and powerful is a secret persuasion that time and space will be granted them before it is too late. Should they live to old age, they doubt not that as they retire from the pleasures and business of this life, they shall have leisure, and, at least, more inclination to think of another world: and should they be cut down in youth, or in maturity, they trust that a lingering sickness will furnish the needed opportunity. There are none, indeed, except the most ignorant, who would distinctly avow, either to others or to themselves, that they are delaying attention to religion on this ground; yet, is not an undefined hope of this nature, the silent apology by which the remonstrances of conscience are silenced, and the emotions of fear suppressed? To such individuals the words of the text sound in tones of alternate encouragement and thunder, "*Now is the accepted time!*"

The dangerous delusion just referred to, may be strengthened by the habit of drawing false conclusions from the numerous accounts of happy deaths which are continually circulated. The best things are liable to abuse; and these, while they afford much needful stimulus and encouragement to some, are greatly abused by others, to their own unspeak-

able injury. The worldly-minded and indolent readers of obituaries, cannot, therefore, be too frequently reminded of the unfounded nature of those hopes which rest on the uncertain and most unfavourable opportunities of a dying hour.

Besides the often-mentioned argument against such a dependance, that they, like others, may be cut down by a stroke too sudden, or too severe, to allow any attention to the concerns of the soul; it may be remarked, that if there are any individuals who have peculiar cause to apprehend that God, in the fulfilment of his awful threatening, will "laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh," it is they who, cherishing these false hopes, have deliberately refused the calls of grace, during all their years of health and vigour. It should also be considered, that by far the greater number of happy deaths of which we read, or hear, relate the experience of persons who had devoted themselves to religion long before. With regard to the instances that occur of death-bed repentance, especially amongst persons previously familiar with the truths of the gospel, they are so rare, and are frequently attended with so much doubt, that to rest our hopes for eternity on the probability of such a case being ours, is a kind of folly and imprudence scarcely heard of in conducting the common concerns of life. It should also be considered, that while most cases of this kind that occur are made

public by widely spread report, nothing is heard, beyond a confined circle, of the continually occurring instances of a less hopeful character. Individuals are daily leaving this world, by whom religion, if not wholly neglected, had been but very partially attended to:—our places of worship, even those where the gospel is faithfully explained, exhibit but too many specimens of this kind. Persons fill their accustomed seats with regularity, and pay some respect to religion by other outward observances, but yet make no decided profession of it, and would candidly confess as much if they were appealed to. There is, indeed, a degree of hope not unfrequently attending the death beds of individuals of this class. An alarming illness forces the sufferer to seriousness: ministers and pious friends now surround him with prayers, tears, and admonitions: a dying person cannot be otherwise than sincere and earnest in his desires of salvation; he listens with avidity; he requests the prayers of others, and attempts the much neglected exercise himself. After having suffered grievous and agonizing apprehensions, it may be, that before the closing scene, his mind becomes in a degree tranquillized; he has *some* hope; it cannot be said, that “he dies and makes *no* sign.” When all is over, the mourning survivors cherish that doubtful spark for their own consolation; it is referred to, perhaps in a funeral

sermon; and hence the neighbours and acquaintance of the deceased, who may be living a life of similar carelessness and neglect, draw a dangerous inference in their own favour, and conclude that they also shall have hope in their end, although they should continue to love and enjoy the world as they have done. With regard to the actual condition of such an individual in the world on which he has entered, it would be presumption, indeed, to pronounce; "charity hopeth all things," and love must needs "believe all things," in such a case; but, oh! who could have the temerity to say, "Let me die the death of the careless professor?" The language not only of true wisdom, but of common prudence, rather is, "Let us give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, that we may escape the fearful uncertainty of such an end!"

Who but they who have felt, can imagine the remorse, the consternation, the hurry, the agonies of such an hour! The reasonable argument which the distracted mind brings against itself is, that, according to the general tenor of Scripture, and according to the most usual dispensations of God with mankind, the great question at the last day will not be—how we *died*, but how we *lived*. The long successive years of life and health form our season of probation, concerning which period it is said, that

“every one shall receive according to what he has done in it.” Now if this precious season is deliberately and wilfully unimproved; if we have not, at any period of it, believed, and from thence forward obeyed and done his commandments, a person at the close of life, conscious of this, must reflect with unutterable anguish, that he has placed himself beyond the *ordinary* dispensations of divine mercy, although not beyond the possible reach of it: for, “to God, all things are possible.” He has (if the expression may be allowed) abandoned himself to the *chance* of making one of an extremely small minority; or to that of forming an exception to a general rule.

The case of the profane and abandoned, of one born and bred in vice and ignorance, who never distinctly heard of the way of salvation, till some charitable visitor comes to declare it to him at the eleventh hour, appears far more hopeful, where signs of repentance and faith are manifested, than that of the cumberer of the ground, of one who has been long an unfruitful partaker of the means of grace. In the former instance, the individual had not been immediately called until that time, therefore his having stood all the day idle need not so greatly discourage him: but, in the latter, the gracious call has been repeated hour after hour, and yet he never went to work in the vineyard.

But to suppose the best and the utmost con-

cerning the final safety of such persons, are we not fully warranted by Scripture to conclude that instead of that "abundant entrance" which is expressly mentioned as the reward of a *holy life*, and of having "abounded in the work of the Lord," individuals thus "plucked from the burning," and "scarcely saved," will "suffer loss," a loss that eternity itself will not repair? If the most faithful and laborious servants of Christ have, at the close of life, lamented with deep regret, that they had not been more devoted to His service, what a painful retrospect must theirs be, who cannot recollect a single act performed from genuine motives of love to God, and delight in his service; but who have, throughout life, sought only, or chiefly, their own interest and pleasure!

From these painful thoughts, let us turn to contemplate the happy and advantageous circumstances of those, who have it yet in their power to devote their youth, their health, and the vigour of their days to God. Whatever apprehensions others may entertain, every *young* person, whether in health or in sickness, may be assured that *now* is, most emphatically, *the accepted time*, with regard to them. Although they may have been guilty of much sinful neglect in having hitherto disregarded the call, yet it still addresses them in accents of sweet encouragement—this is *their* day of salvation; and shall it be suffered to pass away unimproved? The

hope of reward sweetens labour in all the affairs of this life. How much do we do in the hope of a distant and uncertain benefit? The pains bestowed on education, the toils of learning a business or profession, are thought abundantly worth while, because of the expected result. How much pains and labour are bestowed in preparations for pleasure!—many days, sometimes, devoted to the entertainment of a single evening, and this believed to be well bestowed too. Why cannot we with a nobler forethought, with extended views, act upon a similar plan, and secure, by a comparatively momentary effort, an eternal reward? To keep our greatest interest always in view, is true wisdom. Let us then, in all seasons, consider whether the line of conduct we are now pursuing, the temper of mind we are habitually indulging, the objects of our present pursuit, are such as will, in their remembrance, soothe or embitter a dying hour; are they such as we shall reflect upon with pain and fear, or with humble satisfaction then?—And oh! let us not be guilty of such cruelty and injustice to ourselves, as to be preparing thorns and briars for that hour!

The threatenings and terrors of the Lord, with which it is needful to persuade the young, and the healthy, are not, however, equally appropriate in addressing the sick, the aged, and the dying, what-

ever their former characters may have been. Those who have already, unhappily placed themselves in the unfavourable and precarious circumstances above described—who have it, therefore, no longer in their power to devote a life to God, are by no means warranted to abandon themselves to despair. Since He still affords them a season, however unfavourable, for reflection and prayer—since intervals of ease and reason are given, let them be employed in earnest application to “the God of all grace, whose ways are not as ours.” Although the shadows of night are fast approaching, the day of salvation is not yet quite closed; there is still a twilight of hope, and He who “multiplies to pardon,” may make even *this* an accepted time. But, reader! you who have still the choice to make, will you venture your ETERNAL ALL on such a fearful peradventure?

XXVII.

THE WONDERFUL BIRD.

SIGNOR PASQUALINI, just arrived from the continent, announced to the inhabitants of a certain village his intention of amusing them, for one evening only, with a variety of entertaining exhibitions and performances, of unrivalled excellence and ingenuity; amongst these, the manœuvres of "THE LEARNED BIRD," and accomplished German bullfinch, were particularly specified, and largely described in his advertisement. What this bird *could* do, seemed not so much to be the question, as what it could *not* do: so rare were its professed attainments. It could, for instance, go through the military exercise with a straw; bow to the company at the word of command; sing different tunes, when called for; articulate some words; draw a triangle with its beak; and spell certain names by pointing to the letters with its claw.

Amongst the spectators of this entertainment were two lads, upon whom it made a strangely different impression. One of them, having read the advertisement in the morning, had his imagination wrought upon all day by the glowing descriptions of Signor Pasqualini's hand-bill: it was not so much those attributes of the bird that were particularly specified, as the undefined intimations of its sagacity, over which his fancy hovered, and which inspired him with so much respect, that it is a question if he felt more veneration for the learning of the parish schoolmaster, than for that of this gifted biped. Full of these expectations, when evening was come, Edward paid his willing sixpence, and entered with trembling eagerness from behind the curtain of green baize that formed the entrance of the show. As the company thickened, and various preliminaries appeared to be going on behind the scenes, his impatience increased to a degree that was almost painful. At length Signor Pasquilini made his appearance and his bow, and after sundry performances, not necessary here to specify, a cage with golden wires was introduced, out of which solemnly stepped the wonderful bird, and immediately hopped upon a perch that was raised for the purpose on the table. This bullfinch, as to its outward appearance, looked much more like other bullfinches than Edward expected. Indeed the hard discipline and solitary life to which its profession had subjected it, had rendered

its plumage less glossy and brilliant, and its movements less natural and graceful than those of most of its species. Edward was a little disappointed at this; however, he concluded that its mental endowments would abundantly compensate for any external deficiencies. The first thing required of the hapless performer was to bow three times to the company. This Edward thought was not very gracefully done; indeed the poor little bird, though for some time accustomed to practise in private, had but newly been introduced at public exhibitions, and it appeared to be half frightened and half ashamed at performing before so large a company. Some of its tricks were diverting enough; but many mistakes and blunders were detected. When, for instance, it was required to point to the letters that spell King George, it stumbled upon the last word first, and thus produced only the inglorious name of *George King*. And when asked where it was that Lord Wellington gained his great victory, whether the bird replied *Waterloo*, or *water gruel*, could only be guessed by the question. Edward could not help laughing at this; yet on the whole he felt no small degree of disappointment, so much so as to be weary of the performance some time before it was over.

Very different was the impression made by the exhibition on another spectator above alluded to. This lad had not happened even to see the advertise-

ment; moreover he had never in all his life heard of such a thing as a learned bird: he only stepped in as he was passing, attracted by the lights, with no idea of what nature the amusement was to be. When therefore the little performer commenced its operations, this boy felt as much pleasure and entertainment as the thing was capable of affording; he laughed out several times, and protested it was "wonderful, really wonderful for such a little creature!" He observed indeed some failures and mistakes, but for these he made the most charitable allowances; because, as he said, "it was but a bird;" and because *he had expected nothing*.

Such were the opposite effects produced by the same spectacle on these differently circumstanced observers; and yet, perhaps, both would agree, when they came to think about it afterwards, that it was a prettier sight to see the sparrows and robbins hopping about in their natural haunts, in gardens and orchards, and pleasanter to hear their simple notes, than to stare at the performances of the most accomplished finch that ever exhibited.

MORAL.

But stay ;—methinks before we part,
A moral may be heard ;—
A hint to many a sanguine heart
From this accomplished bird :
The truth imprest on every brow,
Where time has past his noiseless plough.

Just thus from life, and what it yields,
Hope steals the zest away ;
We never tread the Elysian fields,
Through which we thought to stray :
Of all the joys on which we seize,
The more we hope, the less they please.

Our pleasures rather seem to spring
From things too low that lie,
For fancy there to sweep her wing,
Or hope to glance an eye ;
These humbler gifts, of all on earth,
Alone *surprise* us with their worth.

Reader, while eager hope arrays
In flowers the youthful year,
Think too what storms and rainy days
Will follow his career :
Expect these storms and clouds to lower—
'Twill brighten every sunny hour.

XXVIII.

A CURIOUS INSTRUMENT.

A GENTLEMAN, just returned from a journey to London, was surrounded by his children, eager, after the first salutations were over, to hear the news ; and still more eager to see the contents of a small portmanteau, which were, one by one, carefully unfolded and displayed to view. After distributing amongst them a few small presents, the father took his seat again, saying, that he must confess he had brought from town, for his own use, something far more curious and valuable than any of the little gifts

they had received.—It was, he said, too good to présent to any of them ; but he would, if they pleased, first give them a brief description of it, and then perhaps they might be allowed to inspect it.

The children were accordingly all attention, while the father thus proceeded. “ This small instrument displays the most perfect ingenuity of construction, and exquisite nicety and beauty of workmanship : from its extreme delicacy, it is so liable to injury, that a sort of light curtain, adorned with a beautiful fringe, is always provided, and so placed as to fall in a moment on the approach of the slightest danger. Its external appearance is always more or less beautiful : yet in this respect there is a great diversity in the different sorts :—but the internal contrivance is the same in all of them, and is so extremely curious, and its powers so truly astonishing, that no one who considers it can suppress his surprise and admiration. By a slight and momentary movement, which is easily effected by the person it belongs to, you can ascertain with considerable accuracy the size, colour, shape, weight, and value of any article whatever. A person possessed of one is thus saved from the necessity of asking a thousand questions, and trying a variety of troublesome experiments, which would otherwise be necessary ; and such a slow and laborious process would, after all, not succeed half so well as a single application of this admirable instrument.”

GEORGE. If they are such very useful things, I wonder that every body, that can at all afford it, does not have one.

FATHER. They are not so uncommon as you may suppose; I myself happen to know several individuals who are possessed of one or two of them.

CHARLES. How large is it, Father? could I hold it in my hand?

FATHER. You might; but I should be very sorry to trust mine with you!

GEORGE. You will be obliged to take very great care of it then?

FATHER. Indeed I must: I intend every night to enclose it within the small skreen I mentioned; and it must besides occasionally be washed in a certain colourless fluid kept for the purpose; but this is such a delicate operation, that persons, I find, are generally reluctant to perform it. But, notwithstanding the tenderness of this instrument, you will be surprised to hear that it may be darted to a great distance, without the least injury, and without any danger of losing it.

CHARLES. Indeed? and how high can you dart it?

FATHER. I should be afraid of telling you to what a distance it will reach, lest you should think I am jesting with you.

GEORGE. Higher than this house, I suppose?

FATHER. Much higher.

CHARLES. Then how do you get it again?

FATHER. It is easily cast down by a gentle movement, that does it no injury.

GEORGE. But who can do this?

FATHER. The person whose business it is to take care of it.

CHARLES. Well, I cannot understand you at all; but do tell us, Father, what it chiefly used for.

FATHER. Its uses are so various that I know not which to specify. It has been found very serviceable in deciphering old manuscripts; and, indeed, has its use in modern prints. It will assist us greatly in acquiring all kinds of knowledge; and without it some of the most sublime parts of creation would have been matters of mere conjecture. It must be confessed, however, that very much depends on a proper application of it; being possessed by many persons who appear to have no adequate sense of its value, but who employ it only for the most low and common purposes, without even thinking, apparently, of the noble uses for which it is designed, or of the exquisite gratifications it is capable of affording. It is, indeed, in order to excite in your minds some higher sense of its value than you might otherwise have entertained, that I am giving you this previous description.

GEORGE. Well then, tell us something more about it.

FATHER. It is of a very penetrating quality; and

can often discover secrets which could be detected by no other means. It must be owned, however, that it is equally prone to reveal them.

CHARLES. What! can it speak then?

FATHER. It is sometimes said to do so, especially when it happens to meet with one of its own species.

GEORGE. What colour are they?

FATHER. They vary considerably in this respect?

GEORGE. What colour is yours?

FATHER. I believe of a darkish colour, but, to confess the truth, I never saw it in my life.

BOTH. Never saw it in your life!

FATHER. No, nor do I wish; but I have seen a representation of it, which is so exact that my curiosity is quite satisfied.

GEORGE. But why don't you look at the thing itself?

FATHER. I should be in great danger of losing it if I did.

CHARLES. Then you could buy another.

FATHER. Nay, I believe I could not prevail upon any body to part with such a thing.

GEORGE. Then how did you get this one?

FATHER. I am so fortunate as to be possessed of more than one: but how I got them I really cannot recollect.

CHARLES. Not recollect! why you said you brought them from London to night.

FATHER. So I did; I should be sorry if I had left them behind me.

CHARLES. Tell, Father, do tell us the name of this curious instrument.

FATHER. It is called—AN EYE.

XXIX.

THOUGHTS ON JOHN THE BAPTIST.

IF a party of bold and noisy school boys, many hundred years ago (supposing such things then were) had chanced, amid the rocks and caves of the deserts of Judea, to discover a certain young recluse, of whom we read in those days—what opinion would they probably have formed of him? From his solitary life, his strange and rude attire, his coarse food, his unpolished manners, they would most likely have thought him (certainly by *modern* boys he would have been thought) half an idiot, and half a savage. If they had invited him to join in their sports, he would probably have discovered awkwardness and

diffidence; if to share in their mirth, he might scarcely have comprehended it: if they had pressed him to assist in any daring and forbidden enterprise, he would certainly have refused, and they would have pronounced him a coward. But what is said of this singular youth, by authority that cannot be contradicted? It is said, that as "the child grew he waxed *strong in spirit*." Now this kind of description is the last, we apprehend, that would have been employed in reference to him, by such observers as have been supposed. So different are the ideas attached by different persons to the same terms! To be *strong in spirit*, they, perhaps, would understand to mean, being daring, impetuous, enterprising in mischief, proud, rebellious; or, in one favourite word, *spirited*. Let us then endeavour to rectify our ideas on the subject, by observing what were the qualities in this youth that gained him so high a character.

Now, the strength of his mind most eminently appeared in his habits of *self-denial*; he was indulgent neither in body nor in mind: well, therefore, might he grow more than commonly vigorous in both. "He was in the desert," it is said; and there coarsely clad, and coarsely fed—he breathed the pure air of the hills, and braved the keen blast of the wilderness:—he indulged in no stimulants unnecessary to his age—he took "neither wine nor strong drink;" and thus his mental and bodily

powers were never enervated. Thus he was qualified for those habits of deep thought and contemplation, which, doubtless, prepared him for the difficult ministry in which he was afterwards to be engaged; and he was entirely withdrawn from the distractions and temptations of the world.

Now, although it was the extraordinary service to which he was to be called, that required this severe and peculiar preparation, yet, we must observe, that a similar kind, though not the same degree, of mental and bodily discipline, is still and ever necessary, in order to the formation of a strong and vigorous character; and in order to distinguished usefulness in after life. Whatever natural courage and activity, whatever good and generous qualities a youth may possess; yet, if he is not capable of self-denial, on small as well as on great occasions; if, on the contrary, his daily habits are indulgent, he will never be *strong in spirit*, but weak, feeble, and irresolute, and easily overcome by temptation.

When the time arrived that called John to his public ministry, we see how admirably this preparatory discipline qualified him for it. How strong was his spirit, and what true courage he possessed, appears from his close preaching and plain dealing with all the different descriptions of persons whom he addressed, and with whom he had to do. To high and low, to soldiers and to kings, he was equally

faithful, and gave to each the most plain and appropriate admonitions.

And again, how eminently does the strength of his mind and the nobleness of his spirit appear in his *humility*. He was a popular preacher—multitudes attended his ministry—all the country people from Judea, and crowds from Jerusalem itself, went out to him in the wilderness. But what effect does all this produce upon him? How does he answer those who imagined he might be the Messiah himself, instead of his herald? “There cometh one mightier than I; he must *increase*, but I must *decrease*.” This is *true* greatness, and we are no longer surprised at that very remarkable expression used concerning him, by the angel, to his father Zacharias: “He shall be great in the sight of the Lord.” Nor when the Saviour afterwards declares, that “there was *none greater* than John the Baptist.” How deeply then ought we to study those qualities, and how earnestly aspire to the attainment of those graces which obtain such high praise from the highest source!

Extraordinary virtues are generally preparatory to extraordinary occasions; and this was eminently the case in the present instance. John did not shrink from the duty of reproving a king for his faults, though well knowing the risk at which he did so; and the consequence was, that to his former

crimes the wicked Herod added this above all, "that he shut up John in prison." How happily do habits of self-denial prepare us for seasons of adversity and privation? It is a question, if John found his prison fare at all less dainty than that to which he had been accustomed, in early life, in the desert of Judea. Nor could his raiment be coarser, nor was the solitude strange to him. When "Herod's birth-day was kept," perhaps, neither he nor his guests (whose appetites were probably palled and vitiated by faring sumptuously every day) enjoyed the feast with so keen a relish as that with which John, that night, partook of his prison allowance. And what a contrast appears between the characters of the king and the captive! While one had so bold a spirit as to reprove the man in whose power he was; the feeble-minded prince had not resolution enough to resist the small temptation to which, that day, he was exposed. In a fit of momentary delight, he made the rash and silly speech of which afterwards he so bitterly repented. This circumstance affords a true specimen of *weakness* of mind; the weakness of a mind which had never been accustomed to restraints—never been exercised in self-denial. When Herod was young, it might be said of him as of John, "that the child grew;" but we may feel quite sure, that it was never *truly* said of him that "he waxed strong in spirit." Most likely he was a spoiled and indulged boy. How long and how well might the daughter of He-

rodias have danced, in the sight of John the Baptist, before he would have squandered one dish of his locusts or one cup of his wild honey upon her! unless, indeed, from motives of compassion or hospitality.

At length the hour came, when all the strength of mind and courage that a man can possess were called into exercise. And we may be sure, that when the executioner appeared at his prison door, the spirit of John did not fail him. He knew that his next remove from that door was to the gate of Heaven. "He had fulfilled his course." This prophet, this "more than a prophet," had finished his useful, laborious and important ministry; he had "prepared the way of the Lord;" and now what had he to wait or wish for, but his eternal recompence?

Let those that are now growing tall and strong in body, inquire seriously and thoughtfully whether they, like John, are also growing in *true strength and vigour of mind*.

XXX.

SPRING FLOWERS.

THAT is a pleasant and generous kind of sympathy which we feel with the unknown—with persons whom we never saw or heard of, and who never saw or heard of us, but who, we are sure, must exist; whose circumstances, pursuits, and pleasures are very similar to our own. I, for instance, am an old gentleman, retired from business, of very regular habits. I occupy a small neat house that stands in a row, in the outskirts of a certain town. To the back of each of these houses a narrow slip of garden ground is attached, surrounded with a high wall. Now this wall is very much like every thing else that I ever met with in life; that is, it has a pretty nearly equal share of good and evil belonging to it. It serves at once to keep out the thieves and the prospect. It prevents our neighbours from overlooking us, but also prevents our overlooking them (which some-

times my good wife seems to regret.) It impedes the free air, and yet shelters us from the cold winds ; it casts a huge shadow over the walks on the one side, but affords us a few peaches and plums on the other : so that I have often moralized upon this wall. Down the middle of my garden runs a neat gravel walk, on each side of which are several small triangular flower beds, surrounded with narrow walks, which intersect each other.

This morning, after having taken my coffee, read the newspaper, wound up the time-piece, examined the barometer, reported the state of it to my wife, and predicted the weather for the day ; and having also fed and dressed my two canaries, all which duties have been punctually performed in the same order, and at the same hour, for many years past, I issued forth to take the accustomed turn in my garden. It was a beautiful morning ; the air having that balmy softness which so cheeringly assures us that another spring is coming ;—a feeling so soothing to the sorrowful, so inspiring to the gay. My gravel walk is richly bordered with polyanthus, snow-drops, and crocuses ; and full tufts of primroses, and other early spring flowers already ornament the beds. I take pride in my flowers, I confess ; and am not a little curious in them. This morning, pleased to see so fine a show of them, and feeling altogether unusually happy and good humoured, it came into my mind, as before hinted (and very

much entertained I was with the thought) what a vast number of old gentlemen and elderly ladies throughout the pleasant gardens of old England, were at that very moment enjoying precisely the same kind of pleasure with myself. For the fine and settled appearance of the sky convinced me (who am not a little weather-wise) that its clear blue canopied at that time the whole of our beautiful island. I fancied I could see them issuing forth, like myself, all their coughs and rheumatisms better for this mild weather; like myself, reposing after the storms of life in contented retirement, and solaced by the same cheap and simple pleasures which solace me. It is not while the mind is agitated by the eager interests of youth, nor while it is occupied and cumbered by the busy concerns of middle life, that pleasures of this kind are most enjoyed. But childhood revels, and age reposes, amid these quiet scenes. Yes, and a part of the pleasure which now in my old age I derive from my flowers arises, I am conscious, from the distant yet vivid remembrance they recal of similar scenes and pleasures of my childhood. My paternal garden seems still to me like enchanted ground, and its flowers like the flowers of Paradise. I shall never see the like again, vain as I am of my gardening!—Those were *poetry*, these are *botany*. How much has passed since I sported in that pleasant garden! All the ordinary events of life have chequered mine. I have, like

other men, been awakened from the dreams of youth by the sober realities of maturity. The cares and comforts of social life have been experienced; schemes have been laid: I have been as anxious, as busy, as diligent in the pursuit of these different objects as other people; and with about the usual proportion of disappointment and success. During this period of my life, to have derived any thing like happiness—that is to have felt an interest in such objects as now, I must candidly confess, really interest me, would have appeared impossible. Nay, I can remember smiling and wondering to see how much my old friends were engrossed in such trifles. But now I wonder no longer. “He who openeth his hand and satisfieth the desire of all living,” has, in his boundless benevolence, provided appropriate enjoyment to solace the feelings, and suit the tastes of every different condition of humanity: and, thanks to His goodness, sweet are the flowers that bloom in the valley of years. To return then to the thought with which I set out, when I considered how many, on this sunny morning, were deriving a wholesome and innocent gratification from the same sources with myself, in circumstances almost exactly similar, I found that the reflection, while it expanded my bosom with a pleasing sympathy, raised it also in gratitude to the Author of all good; and I thanked Him, I hope devoutly, for having (if I may so express myself) taken such pains to please us;

such exquisite pains as seem to be bestowed upon flowers especially, so that "Solomon in all his glory" could by no means compare with them. Our Lord himself by inviting us thus to "behold the flowers of the field," sanctions a taste for the beauties of nature, when sanctified by a due recollection and acknowledgment of their Creator. For without this it is but a species of idolatry: and a strange and miserable sight it is to see old people, and many such I fear there are, grovelling rather than reposing in these things; admiring indeed, and enjoying them, but with nothing more than a cold and general acknowledgment of their Maker. Nor could they truly say that they love Him "*more* than these." There is a sublime interest in His works when indeed we see the finger of God in them, and behold them with a vivid recollection of their being—"His workmanship," which can only be felt by those who know Him too as the God of grace.

And now that I am in such a moralizing mood, I shall go on to say, that the satisfaction I derive from my flower garden, and other equally simple pleasures, reads me a lesson upon life which I would fain read to those of my young friends who may take the trouble to peruse an old man's epistle. Does it all come to this then?—All my eager and busy pursuits and schemes, by which I was often so engrossed as to find neither time nor inclination for calm and serious thought!—Do all my hopes and exertions,

and does all my ambition end in these flowers?— Surely “I have been disquieted in vain!” How many of my schemes do I now see were vain or useless! how much has the fulfilment of any of them disappointed my expectations! I can now calmly smile at those anxieties which then racked me with restless uneasiness. I can look tranquilly, at least, upon my severest trials, and see the emptiness of my warmest wishes. And I now feel a quiet satisfaction in the ordinary comforts and regularly returning enjoyments of a retired and monotonous life, and an interest in the few tranquil pleasures it affords, which, however different in kind, equal I believe as to the degree of real happiness, what I have ever derived from things which are regarded as the chief pleasures of life.

As I said before, I am aware of, for I can remember, the feeling of wonder and pity, and something not unlike contempt, with which the regular habits and sober enjoyments of old people are regarded by the young; and it must be granted too, that some elderly people have their *odd ways*, which give a little occasion for such remarks (though as for my wife and I, nobody can say that we are any thing more than a little particular not to be put out of our old customs.) Nevertheless, however dissatisfied any young readers may be with the prospect, I cannot predict, nor even wish any thing better for them, than that, after the cares and vicissitudes of active

life, they may be indulged with a season of repose and tranquillity, in some such quiet retreat as my own; that they may then be able to look back upon the past as not wholly devoted to worldly schemes and pursuits, but marked also by a course of activity and usefulness in the cause of God and their neighbour; and that the sublime hopes of another life may be the support and solace of their declining years. And as for their amusements, I shall wish nothing better for them than that they may be able to taste an innocent and salutary delight in the good, gay, and well dressed company which a little flower garden displays to view on a fine spring morning.

XXXI.

CONVERSATION IN A LIBRARY.

A FATHER and his son having past some hours very agreeably in surveying the various magnificent apartments of a nobleman's seat, sat down to rest awhile in the spacious and well furnished library,

which was celebrated as containing as complete a collection of ancient and modern literature as any private one in the country. As their eyes wandered leisurely over this curious congregated mass of human thought, reflections natural on such an occasion passed silently in the mind of each; and at length gave rise to the following conversation; which, should it prove somewhat desultory, the candid reader will please to remember that the speakers were fatigued.

FATHER. What think you, Arthur—should such a sight as this impress us most forcibly with the greatness or the littleness of the mind of man?

ARTHUR. With its greatness, surely, should it not? for what an immense number of clever men must have lived in the world to write such a number of books, and how *very* clever some of them were?

FATHER. They were so indeed, compared with other men—but the question is, whether the united ingenuity and cleverness of all mankind does not rather tend to expose the narrow bounds of human knowledge, and the feeble powers of the human intellect, than to exalt them. It is indeed the conclusion which the wisest of men, and the most profound philosophers have come to, as the result of their most laborious researches in the pursuit of truth and knowledge, that the more they know, the more they discover how little can be known.

ARTHUR. But still what very useful and inge-

nious discoveries have been made in science and philosophy.

FATHER. That is true ; and it is one proof of the good sense and superior light of modern times, that the researches of science are now confined to practical purposes, and such as are of real utility ; while vague hypothesis, and barren speculation are abandoned. But then this very circumstance shews that the limited extent of man's powers and operations is acknowledged by common consent.

ARTHUR. What an immense sum all these books must have cost ! It is at least one advantage of being rich—having it in one's power to possess such a capital library.

FATHER. Indeed it is ; however it is gratifying to reflect that the choicest productions of literature are by no means confined to the opulent ; for although persons in moderate circumstances cannot enjoy the indulgence and luxury of possessing such a complete collection, yet the few works of the few great geniuses that have appeared in the world are so easily procured, as to be within the reach of most persons who are capable of appreciating them. There is no monopoly or aristocracy in literature. Its *richest* treasures are generally and easily accessible. It is really a curious, and certainly a gratifying thought, that the sublime imaginings of our greatest poet—those thoughts which were produced at such an incalculable expense of mental labour, are contained

in so small a compass (as indeed all *sublime* imaginings must be) that they may be procured for a sum that any decent lad may soon save from his weekly allowance. Thus it is, by the kind and wise arrangements of Providence, that, while great riches and worldly honour are the portion only of a few, and unattainable, generally speaking, by those who have them not; yet, that all that is of *intrinsic worth* in this world—knowledge and virtue, are placed within the reach of every one who diligently seeks them. For with regard to the most important and interesting discoveries of science, the grand results are known even to the vulgar: and the most material facts are of no difficult access. If it were necessary to possess all these books, and in their splendid bindings too, in order to know what Newton discovered, or to enjoy what Milton thought, gold would indeed attain a value and a dignity, which no image or superscription whatever has yet stamped upon it.

ARTHUR. When one is looking at such a number of books, it is amusing to observe what very different subjects different writers have chosen.

FATHER. Yes, and it is well they have. We are apt to feel discontent, and sometimes contempt, when we meet with people whose tastes, pursuits, and opinions differ widely from our own; yet, to this circumstance (the vast variety of tastes, pursuits, and opinions that exists amongst men) is chiefly to be attributed the progress that has been made in

useful knowledge. Only suppose that all thinking men had been of one opinion on every point of philosophy, and exactly agreed on all matters of taste, how little stimulus would there have been to thought and invention; and what a dull uniformity in the few writings that would have been produced. Nothing, therefore, is more narrow or illiberal, than to regret the diversity of opinion and taste that exists; since it is the grand means which Providence has appointed for keeping the human mind from stagnation, and for eliciting truth. We should therefore learn, not only to tolerate but to respect the views and predilections of other people, however they may differ from our own.

ARTHUR. Yet surely we ought to regret it when we think, and are almost sure, that people are in the wrong?

FATHER. We ought to be very sure of that indeed, before we even regret it; there are, however, some errors of opinion, which are so injurious in their consequences, and which shew such a perversion of mind in those who hold them, that we ought not only to regret but to counteract them by every fair and gentle means in our power. But there are very widely differing opinions, on less essential points, amongst persons of equal piety, learning, and genius; and while it is both curious and instructive to observe this, it is, at the same time, most consoling and satisfactory to remark how, in all things most impor-

tant, the wise and good agree. Observe that large compartment opposite to us, entirely occupied by works on divinity. Doubtless there is much error and much lumber mingled there with what is valuable and true. Yet with respect to all those amongst these writers who may be fairly called men of piety, what a happy harmony would, after all, be found to exist in their sentiments! There is, indeed, no consideration more satisfactory to the inquiring mind, than this universal agreement of good men, in opinion and experience on essential points. * Nor is there any reflection more impressive than to consider the weight of argument and force of persuasion which their *united* testimony affords, as to the importance of the subjects on which they write. Thus, the very sight of these books preaches silently as persuasive and eloquent a sermon as can be heard from any pulpit.

ARTHUR. Then, father, it seems one may, by a little reflection, get more good from the outside of a book, than many people do from its contents.

FATHER. Why truly, it is more profitable to reflect without reading, than to read without reflecting. But let us suppose, that all the forcible arguments, lively representations, affecting appeals—all the warnings, threatenings, invitations, persuasions, that the piety, benevolence, and genius of these various writers have employed (with their “diversity of gifts but the same Spirit”) in remind-

ing mankind of the infinite importance of their eternal interests—suppose, I say, that all this mass of persuasion could be collected into a focus, and with its united force bear upon the mind—would not the effect be overpowering?—and yet this would be no false impression: nothing more than the real nature of the case would justify: no more than we should constantly feel if our minds were not blinded with sin, and rendered strangely insensible by earthly objects.

ARTHUR. But how would it be possible to retain such a strong impression, supposing one could feel it for a moment?

FATHER. We must remember that, after all, no power of human eloquence, nor all its powers united, would be sufficient to enlighten the darkness of the mind of man. But one ray of light from above—one powerful word from Him who can open the eyes of the understanding, and cause things to be “spiritually discerned,” will instantly effect the happy purpose. Therefore, however diligent we might be in using and improving every means for exciting profitable impressions, all would be vain, unless we are perpetually seeking this all-powerful influence. But, if we do ask and seek it earnestly, God will assuredly bestow it; even that habitual impression of the superior importance of our future and eternal interests which constitutes a spiritual mind; and which will cause our affections and conversation to be in heaven.

ARTHUR. There are many books not exactly on religious subjects, that yet are very profitable.

FATHER. Yes; and this is the case even with the writings of some men who were wholly ignorant of true religion, and which affords indeed, an additional argument in favour of it. Men of thought, wisdom, and genius, in the darkest times, have borne witness to the truth of the divine declaration, that "wisdom excelleth folly, as much as light excelleth darkness." The laws of God, written in the hearts and consciences, even of them who "knew not God," are thus vindicated and enforced. So that when either in thought, word, or action, we offend against them, we at the same time oppose the combined sense, wisdom, experience, and the general testimony of all mankind.

Solomon, I dare say, was never in such a library as this; yet he expresses a sentiment which is very suitable on such an occasion, when he sums up all the sage reflections he had been making on the vanity of the world in this concise sentence:—"Of making many books there is no end:" (he would indeed have thought so, if he had lived in these days!)—and he evidently spoke from experience, when he added, "that much study is a weariness to the flesh." "Let us then," he says, "hear the conclusion of the whole matter:—Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty, and the whole wisdom of man."

XXXII.

EVENING THOUGHTS.

THE hours have danced their joyous round,
Adorned in flowers of May ;
Till each in turn, with mercy crowned,
Has come and passed away.

The constant sun has run his race
Athwart the boundless deep ;
And ne'er amid that trackless space
Has failed his path to keep.

The earth has drank the morning' dew,
And fed her flowery train ;
'The flowers have spread their charms to view,
And decked the earth again.

Now evening's lengthened shadows spread
To curtain them around,
And each reclines her modest head,
In gentle slumbers bound.

Beasts, strong to labour, o'er the lea
Have drawn the cumbrous plough ;
And feed in pastures, glad and free,
Their toil accomplished now.

Laborious man fulfils his task,
And seeks repose ; but I—
Is mine accomplished ?—let me ask—
And conscience shall reply.

Birds, beasts, and trees, unmoved by choice,
Have each improved the day,
Obedient still to Nature's voice :—
But whose did I obey ?

Were Christ's commands before my sight
In all I thought and spoke ?
And have I borne his burden light,
And worn his easy yoke ?

Have pride or wrath disturbed my breast,
Or wishes wild and vain ?
Has sinful sloth my powers possessed,
And bound them in its chain ?

Has not my resolution failed ?
Lord, search, for thou didst see ;
And has not base self-love prevailed
Instead of love to thee ?

Did I this day, for small or great,
My own pursuits forego,
To lighten by a feather's weight
The mass of human woe?

Mid cares and hopes and pleasures mean,
With eager fondness sought,
Oh, has one glance at things unseen
Sublimed my earthly thought?

Has grace, descending from above,
This evil heart possessed ;
In meekness, patience, truth and love,
To all around expressed ?

Great is the peace such grace bestows
'Mid storms of earthly strife ;
And calm and sweet is their repose
Who live this hidden life.

If thus my cheerful hours had sped,
How blest the day's decline ?
'Tis past !—but though for ever fled,
To-morrow still is mine.

XXXIII.

PSALM CXIX. 19.

*"I am a stranger in the earth, hide not thy commandments
from me."*

OUR life is so short when compared with the long rolling ages that have preceded, and those which probably will follow; so short, if we estimate what we have to accomplish in it; so short, compared with the interminable period beyond this present scene; that each individual who starts into existence is indeed like a stranger stranded on a foreign shore, where all around him is new and unexpected, and where the brief sojourn he is to make is insufficient fully to acquaint him with the nature of the country, the characters of its inhabitants, and with his own relation to them. Were it so ordered that we, like our first parents, awoke into being with all our powers and faculties in a state of maturity, how overpowering would be the surprise, the transport, and the apprehension; how unspeakably important would appear the gift of existence! and how awful the terms of that existence!—born to die—and yet to

live: and our never-ending weal or woe depending on the manner in which this short prelude to futurity should be spent: and on the preference we may give to the concerns of an endless life over those of this brief passage to it.

But instead of such an overwhelming impression, these wondrous circumstances of our condition break so gradually upon the mind, as it slowly emerges from the mists of infancy and wakens from the dreams of childhood, that it is only at some rare moments of deep thought or strong excitement, that we can feel any adequate consciousness of the strangeness and awfulness of our state. There are many, doubtless, who pass through life without one such startling recollection. But with those whose minds have been cultivated, and who are at all disposed to reflection, it is scarcely possible but that such feelings should occasionally interrupt the ordinary current of thought. In youth, when the mind begins to expand, when the imagination is most vivid, and when existence is really new, it is then that such impressions are most frequent, most powerful, and most capable of improvement.

“ I am a stranger in the earth—a stranger to myself and to all around me; all seems mysterious and marvellous: the more I think, the more I am lost in uncertainty, and overwhelmed with the confused consciousness of being; and in fearful apprehensions concerning my future existence. To whom can I turn

but to Him who made me and fashioned me, who when my spirit is overwhelmed within me, knows the path I should take? Hide not, then, thy commandments from me." When such thoughts and feelings glance across the mind, they should be arrested and detained, till the convictions to which they lead are deeply impressed; and we see it to be our grand business, interest, and happiness in this short life, "to know God, that we may enjoy him for ever."

The feeling of being but strangers and sojourners here is by no means natural to us; on the contrary, so strong are our earthly attachments, and such is the force of habit and the influence of sensible objects, that it is difficult enough to feel otherwise than at home in this world, and not to wish that we could find a rest in it. Even the daily evidence we have of our uncertain possession of it, in the warnings which diseases and death are continually holding up to view, is insufficient to produce more than a momentary recollection. Hence the necessity of prayer; of such appropriate petitions as those with which David never failed to follow up his own reflections; knowing that otherwise they would be wholly unprofitable to him. And when he prayed that God would not "hide his commandments from him," he surely meant something more than that he might become accurately acquainted with the laws of God contained in his word. There can be no doubt that he was already well furnished with this head knowledge; but

he knew there was something more than this necessary, and that much more was promised ;—" the *secret* of the Lord is with them that fear him"—even that spiritual understanding of his word and will which is often " hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes."

There are many things concerning the commandments of God which he will hide from us till we beseech him to discover them to us. But there is one mistake which, especially, we are *sure* to fall into; indeed, it is the grand delusion which we bring into the world with us, and which is the cause of all our misery; namely, that we think " his commandments grievous." And, although he assures us to the contrary, and although every day's experience tends to convince us that we are happy or miserable exactly in proportion to the diligence or carelessness with which we observe those commands; yet do we continue to feel and think them a bondage, and to wish to rid ourselves of the yoke and the burden, till Jesus himself, by instilling his graces and writing his laws in our hearts, convinces us that the " yoke is easy and the burden light."

The view which our depraved nature gives us of the laws of God is, that they are the arbitrary mandates of a hard master. " I knew thee that thou art an austere man," is exactly the feeling of the heart towards Him naturally; but when we are divinely taught to know God, and to learn his will, then we

admire his goodness in this especial respect, that all his commands tend to save us from misery ; and that the restrictions which his law imposes are as essential to our happiness and welfare in this life, as they are to our safety and felicity in the life to come.

We prove ourselves to be but strangers in the world, and unacquainted with its true character, by our constant inclination to partake of its " mortal poisons," and to drink of its " dangerous waters," instead of contenting ourselves with the wholesome fruits and pure springs which are provided for our refreshment. Our first parents set us an example in this respect which all their children are prone to follow. But those who are taught of God, learn to discriminate between good and evil ; and see it to be as much their interest as their duty to refuse what is prohibited, even though it should appear fair as the fruits of Paradise.

Let it ever be remembered, that when we feel most at ease and at home in this world, when its delights seem to satisfy us, and its ties most closely unite us to it ;—when we shew ourselves to be strangers to its snares, bewildered and endangered by its thorny mazes,—we then have most need to say,

" Since I'm a stranger here below,
Let not thy path be hid ;
But mark the road my feet should go,
And be my constant guide."

XXXIV.

THE LIST OF NAMES.

A GENTLEMAN who was making a tour through several parts of the country, on a mission of benevolence, on his arrival in a certain town, was, upon inquiry, immediately directed to the house of Mr. W——, a man who was eminently distinguished in the neighbourhood in which he lived; but it was neither for his affluence, his style of living, his party spirit, his conviviality, his connoisseurship, nor his literary taste, that he was distinguished: to none of these things he paid any particular attention, and to some of them he was decidedly averse. But if any stranger in distress, or any one engaged in a good work and labour of love, came to that place, inquiring, according to the apostolic custom, “who in it was worthy;” Mr. W—— was the name that instantly occurred to whoever of his townsfolks chanced to be applied to. And, as he was not in the least

busy and officious in his benevolence, and as he exercised his judgment and discrimination in every case that was presented to his notice, he was as much respected and esteemed as he was beloved by his neighbours.

The stranger who was now directed to his door, introduced himself to Mr. and Mrs. W——, and to a young lady who happened to be on a visit of a few days at their house. Having explained the nature of his business, and solicited their advice and co-operation, the stranger requested Mr. W—— to furnish him with a list of names of such of the inhabitants, especially of the young people of the place, as would be most likely to enter into his views, and exert themselves in the cause. Mr. W—— immediately took out his pencil, and set down two or three names at the top of a sheet of paper, without a moment's hesitation. Having so done, he began to rub his forehead, and put himself in the attitude of recollection.

"I fear Sir," said he, "we shall find some difficulty in filling up our list. There is a good number of young people here, but —— My dear" (addressing his wife,) "what do you think the Miss J——'s would say to such an application?"

MRS. W. There can be no harm in putting down their names: as a *new thing* I think they would be very likely to take it up.

STRANGER. Alas! Madam, we find *Miss J——'s*,

go where we will ; the difficulty is to meet with those who are willing to plod and sag in a good cause, when the novelty and *eclat* are gone by. However, we may be thankful that there are so many, and I trust the number is increasing, of those "hidden ones," who are willing to labour on, without noise and without praise.

MRS. W. And there are Mrs. and Miss P——.

MR. W. Yes ; I was thinking of them ; but we must try and get one or two of the *great folks* to sanction us first, otherwise they would, I fear, be shy of the application.

STRANGER, (*smiling.*) The old story again ! we meet with many of those *Mistresses* and *Misses* who can only venture to do good in good company, or with their own party.

MR. W. What do you say to Mrs. F—— and her daughters ?

MRS. W. We must let them have all the management, and all the credit too, or they will not move a finger for us.

STRANGER, (*laughing.*) As to the credit, they shall be perfectly welcome to that ; and as to the management, we find ways of humouring weak persons of this description, by giving them some office, or a little apparent distinction in the business, without much inconvenience to the cause. But really Sir, these good people in your town seem all to be old acquaintances of mine.

MR. W. Yes Sir : as face answereth to face—

MRS. W. I was thinking of all the G——'s.

MR. W. So was I ; but the worst of it is, they will never join in it if the J——'s do ; it would set them against the thing at once ; however we can call on *them* first.

STRANGER, (*smiling again.*) But then will not these J——'s make the same objection to the G——'s ?

MR. W. I think they have rather more sense ; they would at any rate be ashamed of allowing such an objection. What think you, my dear, of Miss L—— ?

MRS. W. I am afraid she is too indolent.

STRANGER. Never mind :—who knows but if we can prevail with her to taste the pleasures of useful activity, she may become at least *less* indolent ? Let us have her name.

MRS. W. Would it be worth while to call at the T——'s ?

MR. W. They are immersed in business : and seem to take an interest in nothing else : to oblige *us* they would probably do a little towards it ; but it is disagreeable enough to apply in these cases.

STRANGER. How great a mistake do those thrifty persons make, in supposing that the time or money they might devote, with a willing mind, to the cause of God, and for the good of their fellow-creatures, would be lost to their families !

MR. W. So far from it Sir, that I am firmly of opinion, from the observations I have made, that what persons thus grudgingly withhold, either of money or time, is taken from them by losses in trade, or in some other way, even seven fold.

STRANGER. I believe it Sir. Providence well knows how to manage this. And I also believe, that those who, influenced by another spirit, exert themselves to their power, and even beyond their power, often have it made up to them a hundred fold.

MRS. W. Well but, there is our friend, Miss D——.

MR. W. Miss D——, I am afraid will have nothing to say to us. This lady, Sir, sees so many bad motives in herself, and in every body else, that she is afraid of doing right for fear of doing wrong.

STRANGER. It is well that this error is not so common as the rest. Bad motives we have in plenty, it is true! Even the apostles of our Lord knew not, on some occasions, "what manner of spirit they were of;" yet, as He who *did* know, did not consider that a sufficient reason for discharging them from his service, so neither can such apprehensions form any excuse for our own negligence, nor for despising the exertions of others.

MRS. W. Well, let us hope, Sir, when you go round amongst our good neighbours, you will find things better than we have given you reason to

expect; ours has really been an unpleasant task this evening: I trust we have not quite forgotten that charity which "hopeth all things."

MR. W. There is, indeed, much danger of doing so, whenever it is necessary to allude to the failings of others. What a consolation it is that He who sees all our bad motives, and knows our manifold infirmities, see also what sincerity we have, even when our fellow-creatures may doubt its existence!

STRANGER. It is, indeed, a tranquillizing thought in this hard-judging world. And we may truly exclaim in this respect, as David did on a different occasion—"Let me fall into the hands of the Lord, and *not* into the hands of man!"

MRS. W. Yes; milder are the chastisements of our Heavenly Father, than the tender mercies of our fellow-creatures.

STRANGER. But what have you to tell me of these names at the top of your list, are there none of these *ifs* and *buts* about them?

MR. W. They are good girls, Sir: I have only to say that they will do all that modest, prudent, well-directed piety and zeal, can do: and that, without any attempt to be busy or to make themselves conspicuous. Indeed, they will give you more information and better advice than I can; and we cannot do better than go and make them acquainted with the business.

As soon as the gentlemen were withdrawn, the

young lady who had remained a silent auditor of the above conversation, said to Mrs. W——,

“ I have been wondering all this time whether, if I had lived in this town *my* name would have been set down; and if it had, *what account would have followed.*”

Mrs. W. That was a question well worth asking, my dear; but it would require much thought, and very close dealing with yourself to answer it faithfully.

YOUNG LADY. I know that, Ma'am; however, one thing I can tell without any trouble at all, and that is, that I should *not* have been classed with those good girls whose names were set down first. How happy, how enviable such people are!

Mrs. W. They are indeed the very happiest people upon earth.

YOUNG LADY. And indeed, indeed, Ma'am, so far from being at all like them, I felt, while you and Mr. W—— were describing the others, as though I myself were being mentioned in almost every instance; I feel as if I had nearly all their faults put together.

Mrs. W. Well, but you have one advantage at least, which perhaps several of those persons do not possess; and which if you are but willing to avail yourself of it, will greatly assist you in avoiding these faults; I mean your being conscious of them.

YOUNG LADY. But how highly favoured some

people are, who seem to have none of these troublesome faults in their way, but do good naturally, as it were!

MRS. W. My dear, I have never met with such a person in my life: nor have you. It is a delusion which flatters our indolence, and which is too often allowed to silence conscience, to suppose that characters eminently good and useful are so by nature and inclination, without very much trouble or self-denial; and that our own failings are so constitutional that we are more to be pitied than blamed for them.

YOUNG LADY. And yet surely, Ma'am, there is a difference in our natural propensities?

MRS. W. Doubtless; but not so great and influential a difference as the indolent and desponding are willing to suppose. Never do we read in the Bible or elsewhere, of any who have glided easily and softly to heaven, borne on the tide of their own amiable dispositions. No, we must all row against the stream, and that perpetually, or our course will be retrograde.

YOUNG LADY. Well, but now there are these B——'s and C——'s?

MRS. W. Well, and do you really suppose that those excellent girls have no conflicts with their own hearts?—Do you think they have had no selfishness, no vanity, no indolence, no pride, no pique, or prejudice, or love of the world to contend with,

however naturally amiable they may be? Yes, they would tell you that they have felt and do feel all this; and that while they live they shall have to maintain the difficult and trying conflict. This *warfare* indeed forms the grand and wide distinction between characters; and the question we should be incessantly putting to our own consciences is—are we *fighting*, or are we *yielding*?

YOUNG LADY. But do not good people sometimes yield to temptation, while those who are not real Christians sometimes resist it.

MRS. W. Occasionally both these things may happen, but not generally. Those who are the sincere followers of Christ do prevailingly follow him and keep his commandments; whilst others, who through the remonstrances of conscience and the restraints of education may resist some sins, yet habitually *do not practise self-denial*.

YOUNG LADY. Ah, I know they do not!—it seems impossible!

MRS. W. They fancy it impossible, because they feel it to be difficult; and because they don't like the trouble. Depend upon it, my dear girl, the real cause of such despondency concerning one's own character is a secret unwillingness to undergo a change; and thus the fatal delusion is willingly indulged, that the attainments which some make in holiness and usefulness are not to be expected in *our own case*.

YOUNG LADY. Well, but do you really think it possible that I, for instance, should ever become so active and useful and excellent as those young people?

MRS. W. If you *really* wish it, my dear, you will ask it fervently, and endeavour perseveringly, and then you will obtain the same grace and strength as they. But if you wish it faintly, you will ask languidly and endeavour lazily, and then you will *not* obtain.

YOUNG LADY. Ah, that is the very thing!—how am I to feel those sincere and earnest desires?

MRS. W. You must begin at the beginning; that is, with a determination to save your own soul; to take no rest or satisfaction in other things till you have hope in Christ: yes, the charity must begin at home; and when once it has been said to you, “Thy sins which were many are forgiven,” then the language of your grateful heart will be, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” and a course of active duty and obedience, with all its difficulties, will be pleasant, and *comparatively* easy.

YOUNG LADY. I am sure I wish that were my happy state.

MRS. W. You wish it perhaps, just as the young ruler did. He desired to obtain eternal life; he could not bear the idea (and who can bear it?) of everlasting destruction. But he wanted so very much to enjoy this world first, that he went away

sorrowful, in the miserable bondage of an earthly mind and an evil conscience, rather than make the sacrifice and become free indeed.

YOUNG LADY. And what *could he* do if he had not strength of mind enough?

MRS. W. "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." Had he never read that promise? could not he then have asked for it? Yes, but the thing was, he was afraid of the consequences; *he did not like* to give up the love of the world.

YOUNG LADY. Well, I often fear that will be my case.

MRS. W. Beware, my dear friend, how you suffer your mind to consent to such a possibility! Do you know what you mean? do you consider what it implies? can you think for one moment of *eternity*, and say so? No, the delusion is this, you indulge an indistinct hope that you shall be saved, *somehow*, at last; that though you cannot expect a *high* seat in heaven, yet that you shall *just be admitted*—that God will never suffer any thing so tremendous to befall *you* as eternal ruin. Because you cannot bear to think of it, you imagine He will not execute his own threatenings. You think he is too merciful.

YOUNG LADY. And is He not merciful?

MRS. W. Yes; and so does He abound in mercy that He suffers these tremendous threatenings to be ever thundering around us, to warn us of our danger; at the same time that He is inviting and

beseeking us to become reconciled to himself; but it must be on his own conditions; and if we will not submit to them, we *must* abide the miserable, the intolerable consequences!

YOUNG LADY. I wish I *could* submit to them.

MRS. W. Those desponding, fretful wishes, believe it my dear, *will never do*—they leave you just where they found you, unholy and unhappy. Say rather, “I *must*, I *will*, lay hold on eternal life!” It is not presumption, nor will God be displeased with such resolute language; because this is the very good he offers you, and your greatest sin is unwillingness to accept it. But do not be discouraged by *difficulties*, these you must meet with, otherwise the kingdom of heaven need not “suffer violence, nor require to be taken by force.” Remember, “they that *overcome*, and they only, shall inherit all things.” There is no promise to the inactive; if we are not fighting we shall never conquer; and remember, in this conflict it is *conquer or die!*

XXXV.

THOUGHTS IN A CROWD.

Long on the merry promenade
The ladies walked, the music played,
And streamers fluttered gay ;
While ocean watched the sun retire,
’Till every ripple, tipped with fire,
Reflects his parting ray.

’Twas there, amid the motley throng,
A musing stranger passed along,
Unnoticed in the crowd ;
And we by some strange arts have guessed
The thoughts he doubtless had expressed
If he had thought aloud.

“ Amid this mass of joy and woe,
One heart,” thought he, “ alone I know,
Its burden and its cares ;

And yet, though strangers all to me,
The bond of Christian charity
Unites my heart to theirs.

“ Yes, and by sympathy I trace
The story told in many a face,
Nor other record need :
They who have sinned and suffered know
The common tale of human woe,
And how all hearts to read.

“ On many a brow, with notice brief,
I learn the tale of hidden grief,
Too ill concealed from view :
In many a sparkling eye I see
The hopes lit up that cheated me,
When life with me was new.

“ And does some passing face express
The lines of sordid selfishness—
Of cold contracted care ?
Well, let me not disgusted turn,
But still, as in a glass, discern
Some likeness even there.

“ On that wan cheek sits pale disease,
And vainly courts the freshening breeze
Its roses to restore ;

Sufferer ! permit a stranger's sigh,
Who fain would turn thy languid eye
Where pain shall be no more.

“ The stones that form this massy pier
Will brave the storms of many a year,
And see an unborn race
Here flaunt, and sport, and pass along,
When I, and each of this gay throng,
Have found our resting place.

“ The thought is trite, but yet so true,
To serious minds 'tis ever new,
And mighty import bears :
And if a stranger might intrude
Grave thoughts on this gay multitude,
Such musings should be theirs !

“ Amid this throng sure some there be
Who tread a path no eye can see,
The path that few have found :
And do *I* climb the heavenly hill,
(Let each inquire) or slumber still
Upon enchanted ground ?

“ Is the poor heart that flutters here
A contrite one—a heart sincere—
Its hopes and joys on high ;

Or is it tied and bound below
To this vain world of vice and woe,
Pleased with its slavery ?

“ This is the question !—Tell me not
What has been or may be thy lot,
While life’s brief lamp burns out !
’Twere cruel trifling to inquire,
Or feel for that a warm desire
While *this* remains a doubt.

“ But now this roving eye would rest
On ocean’s gently heaving breast,
Its storms all hushed to sleep ;
Gladly my weary spirit flies
From human woes and vanities,
To Him who spread these radiant skies,
And rules the mighty deep.”

Thus inly musing as he went,
His way the pensive stranger bent
Amid the heedless throng :
And let the reader undertake
To settle if his thoughts would make
A *sermon* or a *song*.

XXXVI.

THE TOAD'S JOURNAL.

It is related by Mr. Belzoni in the interesting narrative of his late discoveries in Egypt, that having succeeded in clearing a passage to the entrance of an ancient temple, which had been for ages buried in the sand, the first object that presented itself, upon entering, was a toad of enormous size ; and (if we may credit the assertions of some naturalists respecting the extraordinary 'longevity of these creatures, when in a state of solitary confinement) we may believe that it was well stricken in years.

Whether the subjoined document was entrusted to our traveller by the venerable reptile as a present to the British Museum, or with the more mercantile view of getting it printed in London, in preference

to Alexandria, on condition of receiving one per cent on the profits, after the sale of the 500th edition, (provided the publisher should by that time be at all remunerated for his risk and trouble,) we pretend not to say. Quite as much as can be vouched for is, the MSS. being faithfully rendered from the original hieroglyphic character.

(The dates are omitted.)

—"CRAWLED forth from some rubbish, and wink'd
with one eye;

Half opened the other, but could not tell why :
Stretched out my left leg, as it felt rather queer,
Then drew all together and slept for a year.
Awakened, felt chilly—crept under a stone ;
Was vastly contented with living alone.
One toe became wedged in the stone like a peg,
Could not get it away—had the cramp in my leg :
Began half to wish for a neighbour at hand
To loosen the stone, which was fast in the sand ;
Pull'd harder—then dozed, as I found 'twas no
use ;—

Awoke the next summer, and lo ! it was loose.
Crawled forth from the stone, when completely
awake ;
Crept into a corner, and grinned at a snake.
Retreated, and found that I needed repose ;
Curled up my damp limbs and prepared for a
doze :

Fell sounder to sleep than was usual before,
And did not awake for a century or more ;
But had a sweet dream, as I rather believe :—
Methought it was light, and a fine summer's eve ;
And I in some garden deliciously fed,
In the pleasant moist shade of a strawberry bed.
There fine speckled creatures claimed kindred with
me,

And others that hopped, most enchanting to see.
Here long I regaled with emotion extreme :—
Awoke—disconcerted to find it a dream ;
Grew pensive ;—discovered that life is a load ;
Began to be weary of being a toad :
Was fretful at first, and then shed a few tears.”—
Here ends the account of the first thousand years.

MORAL.

To find a moral where there's none
Is hard indeed, yet must be done;
Since only morals sound and sage
May grace this consecrated page :
Then give us leave to search a minute,
Perhaps for one that is not in it.

How strange a waste of life appears
This wondrous reptile's length of years !
Age after age afforded him
To wink an eye, or move a limb,
To doze and dream ;—and then to think
Of noting this with pen and ink ;
Or hieroglyphic shapes to draw,
More likely, with his hideous claw !
Sure length of days might be bestowed
On something better than a toad !
Had his existence been eternal
What better could have filled his journal ?

True, we reply ; our ancient friend
Seems to have lived to little end ;
This must be granted ;—nay the elf
Seems to suspect as much himself.

Refuse not then to find a teacher
In this extraordinary creature ;
And learn at least, whoe'er you be,
To moralize as well as he.
It seems that life is all a void,
On selfish thoughts alone employed ;
That length of days is not a good,
Unless their use be understood ;
While if good deeds one year engage,
That may be longer than an age ;
But if a year in trifles go,
Perhaps you'd spendth a thousand so.
Time cannot stay to make us wise,
We must improve it as it flies ;
The work is ours, and they shall rue it
Who think that time will stop to do it.

And then, again, he lets us know
That length of days is length of woe.
His long experience taught him this,
That life affords no solid bliss ;
Or if of bliss on earth you scheme,
Soon you shall find it but a dream ;
The visions fade, the slumbers break,
And then you suffer wide awake.
What is it but a vale of tears,
Though we should live a thousand years ?

XXXVII.

ON VISITING COWPER'S GARDEN AND SUMMER HOUSE
AT OLNEY.

ARE these the trees?—Is this the place?
These roses, did they bloom for him?
Trode he these walks with thoughtful pace?
Passed he amid these borders trim?

Is this the bower?—a humble shed
Methinks it seems for such a guest!
Why rise not columns, dome bespread,
By art's elaborate fingers drest?

Art waits on wealth, there let her roam—
Her fabrics rear, her temples gild:
But Genius, when he seeks a home,
Must send for Nature's self to build.

This quiet garden's humble bound,
This homely roof, this rustic fane,
With playful tendrils twining round,
And woodbines peeping at the pane:—

That tranquil tender sky of blue,
Where clouds of golden radiance skim,
Those ranging trees of varied hue—
These were the sights that solaced him.

We stept within:—at once on each
A feeling steals, so undefined;
In vain we seek to give it speech—
'Tis silent homage paid to Mind.

They tell us here he thought and wrote,
On this low seat—reclining thus;
Ye garden breezes, as ye float,
Why bear ye no such thoughts to us!

Perhaps the balmy air was fraught
With breath of heaven;—or did he toil
In precious mines of sparkling thought
Concealed beneath the curious soil?

Did zephyrs bear on golden wings
Rich treasures from the honied dew ?
Or are there here celestial springs
Of living waters, whence he drew ?

And here he suffered !—this recess
Where even Nature failed to cheer,
Has witnessed oft his deep distress,
And precious drops have fallen here !

Here are no richly sculptured urns
The consecrated dust to cover ;
But nature smiles and weeps, by turns,
In memory of her fondest lover.

XXXVIII.

THE TROUBLESOME FRIEND.

To the Editor of the Youth's Magazine.

Sir,

IN the hope that some of your correspondents may offer a few remarks on the subject on which I am about to address you, I have been induced to lay before you certain grievances under which I have long privately groaned: and as it is possible that others besides myself may have similar things to complain of, you may, by the insertion of my letter, be rendering a public service while conferring a private obligation.

You must know that the house adjoining my Father's is occupied by a family with whom we are on terms of intimacy. The eldest daughter especially, being a girl of my own age, I have always considered as a particular friend; and notwithstand-

ing the complaints I am about to lay before you, I really feel a sincere regard for her; although I will not deny that the warm affection which I at first entertained is greatly damped by the continual vexations to which her conduct exposes me. In short, Sir, she is one of those good sort of people whose misfortune it is to be *very* soon affronted.

Now it is needless to state how many occasions will perpetually occur, between such near neighbours, of taking offence where there is a disposition to do so;—and that, notwithstanding the most sincere and diligent efforts on one part to avoid them. Being myself one of a large family, my time is very much occupied by domestic affairs; besides by attention to those pursuits which are necessary to the completion of my education. Now it unfortunately happens that our neighbour, although in circumstances apparently similar to my own, has, or makes a much larger portion of leisure than I can command; and hence arises one of the principal sources of uneasiness between us. She is so much *hurt*, as her phrase is, that I am not ready and willing at all times of the day *to step in*, or to have a gossip over the garden wall. Now, although no one can enjoy the pleasures of society more than I do at proper seasons, yet I must say it is no enjoyment to me to have the regular and agreeable routine of my daily avocations liable to perpetual interruption. It is however on this account that my troublesome

friend is perpetually reproaching me with being—"a bad neighbour"—"unsociable"—"proud;" and with being indifferent to her society.

I do assure you that I cannot pace up and down our garden walk with a book in my hand, but at the hazard of giving offence; for if she should happen to be within sight, and if I should not happen to raise my head to nod to her, and say Good morning, it will take her a week to pardon the neglect. Then, it would surprise you to hear the plausible manner she has of representing her grievances; so that when her complaints have been repeated to me by some *mutual friend*, I have really began to fancy myself quite in the wrong; and yet upon the coolest reflection I cannot accuse myself of misconduct in this matter.

My friend is wont, with a very resigned, pathetic, and reasonable sort of look and manner to make such complaints as the following.—"I do feel a little hurt, I must confess;—so much attention as I have shewn to her, and so much regard as, I can truly say, I feel for her. Why, I have known her pass our parlour window twenty times in a day, when she knows I have been sitting there, without once giving herself the trouble to turn her head to nod to me;—is not this a little strange, so intimate as we are?"

"Certainly, it is," says our mutual friend.

"Well, and then she makes an excuse of being so

vastly busy : for my part I've no notion of being too busy to speak to a friend, have you ? ”

“ Certainly not.”

“ Well, one can never step in there but one seems to be interrupting them : and it is quite a favour to get her to bring her work, and sit an hour with one in the morning : in short, I have done asking her. I don't deny that she is willing to come in and do one a kindness, when it is needed ; but I like a friend to be a friend at all times ; and in my opinion there's nothing so charming as a sociable disposition ; for my own part this is so much *my* temper, that, as I often say, I feel these slights the more : and certainly at times I cannot help feeling a little hurt.”

In this style, as I have been repeatedly informed, she makes out a case against me. But as I never take any other notice of such charges than by doing all in my power to shew her real friendship, we might go on tolerably, if it were not that sometimes owing to some unforeseen occurrence, or mistake, which it is impossible always to guard against, my friend takes more serious offence :—so much so, at times, that during many weeks she has refused to speak to me. I should be ashamed to call the attention of your readers to the detail of affairs so trifling, if it were not for the sake of illustrating my meaning ; with this view I will mention an instance or two of the kind.

The last time that she appeared so much offended, it was in consequence of my having omitted to send her a formal invitation to spend the evening with me. Wishing to see several of my young friends, I had previously consulted with her about the day, and, having fully agreed together when it should be, I sat down to write the notes to my other friends, without its even occurring to me that she would expect any further notice. However, to my great surprise, she did not join our party; and when I sent in to inquire the reason, she returned me only a cold and formal excuse. It was in vain that I endeavoured to recollect any thing I had done or left undone that could have vexed her; and it was not till weeks afterwards that she condescended to explain the cause of her displeasure. Now really, if I had thought of writing her a note of invitation, I should have been in equal danger of giving offence; for then, it is probable she would have accused me of being too ceremonious with her.

I should be more ready to suspect that the blame was on my part, if it were not that others of her acquaintance make the same complaints. We are both of us teachers in our Sunday School; and there is no situation, as you may be aware, in which a quarrelsome or peevish disposition is more likely to shew itself. You will not be surprised, therefore, when I say that my poor neighbour is continually taking umbrage with some of her fellow teachers:

when any fresh arrangement takes place in the classes, she seldom fails to complain that all the most stupid children are selected for her. Her attendance at the school is not the most regular; yet no one can offer her the kindest remonstrance on this subject, or suggest the smallest improvement in her method of teaching, without the certainty of her being highly offended. If any new plans are projected without consulting her, that is sure to be considered as a personal affront; and if, on the other hand, she is consulted, we are equally sure of her objecting to what is proposed. She is always complaining that she has so little to do with the management of the school; and indeed she is so constantly dissatisfied, that her services are much less acceptable than they would otherwise be: for there is, you know, trouble and difficulty and fatigue enough in a Sunday School, without having our embarrassments increased by disagreements among the teachers.

Having been so long used to the peculiarity of my friend's temper, I was really scarcely aware of the degree of bondage and restraint which it imposed upon me, until lately when she was absent from home on a visit of some months. I cannot adequately describe to you how much I felt at liberty as soon as she was gone. I could now walk in the garden without looking fifty ways to see if she was within sight. I could go out or come in, read or

write, or take a walk with any other friend, and all with a degree of freedom and comfort unknown heretofore. And the glow of sincere pleasure with which I should otherwise have welcomed her return, was (I do not deny it) damped exceedingly by the recollection of the trouble it would inevitably bring upon me.

Now surely that must be a serious fault in a person's character, which, in spite of many good qualities, renders her company burdensome, and her absence a deliverance; and if any thing could be suggested that might successfully represent the weakness and unreasonableness of such a disposition, it would at once do a real service to all such troublesome friends, and inspire with the warmest gratitude all their troubled acquaintance.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

PENELOPE.

XXXIX.

A LETTER TO WHOMSOEVER IT MAY CONCERN.

Dear Reader,

HAPPENING to glance my eye upon the title of a paper in the last number of the Youth's Magazine, I was induced to put on my spectacles, and give it a reading: and although many of those who contribute to its pages are doubtless better prepared, in most respects, than myself, to reply to it, yet on one account I feel peculiarly qualified to accept the challenge there given:—it is that I myself, for a considerable portion of my life, was one of the society of *troublesome friends*.

I can assign more reasons than one for my having long withdrawn from that society; but must frankly acknowledge that the primary cause was my having few friends left to be troublesome to. This circumstance at once afforded me leisure for reflection and roused me to it: for observing that my society was

shunned, first by one, and then by another of my associates, I began to employ many solitary hours in endeavouring to discover the cause; and after various unsuccessful attempts to trace it to the misconduct of others, I was at last compelled to suspect that, after all, the fault might be in myself.

Without troubling you with the long course of experiment and observation by which I was led to this unpleasant conclusion, I shall content myself with stating it to be my settled conviction that, an excessive sensibility to injury—a readiness to take offence on small occasions—a disposition to jealousy, proceed from nothing so much as a tendency to overrate our own worth and consequence. Hence it is that we entertain unreasonable expectations of the attentions due to us from others; and the inevitable disappointment which ensues, mortifies our vanity and self-love, and produces that fretful, complaining, or resentful temper which gives so much trouble to our neighbours, and ten-fold more uneasiness to ourselves.

Persons whose misfortune it is to magnify their own consequence, instead of making a liberal allowance for similar infirmities in their neighbours, expect that every body should regard them in the same disproportionate view; and are first astonished, and then hurt, when they discover how far this is from being the case. She who is always thinking of herself, imagines that others must be always thinking of

her; at least she thinks it ought to be so; though of all persons, such a one is the least likely to excite a lively interest in those around her.

Another cause of the disposition in question I discovered to be, in my own case, the want of a sufficient interest in the useful employments of life; which left me at leisure to indulge that idle and gossiping turn of mind from whence mischief of one sort or another is sure to arise. When, as a resource from the painfulness of my reflections, I began to engage more heartily in my pursuits, it was astonishing how much less inclination I felt to watch the motions and arraign the conduct of my neighbours. Being fully occupied myself, I often quite forgot to notice whether they paid me proper attentions or not; and a thousand little things passed unnoticed, at which I should most certainly have taken offence, had I been on the look out for it. I also acquired by this means, a little more charity in judging of the conduct of my neighbours; for it could not but occur to my mind that whereas, while I was busily engaged in my own occupations I had little leisure to think of *them*; so they, for a reason equally good, might sometimes lose a lively recollection *even of me*. That very common admonition—to *mind one's own business*, is really an excellent one; for while an energetic attention to one's own affairs effectually checks an impertinent and mischievous curiosity about the conduct of other people, it by no means prevents a

benevolent concern for their welfare, or activity in their service, when they may happen to require it. Thus I found that while I became less and less inclined to break off an interesting employment in order to watch whether one neighbour went by without calling, or whether another paid me some expected attention, I was yet much more willing than heretofore to give up some portion of my time to them when I could do them any good by that means.

There was another consideration which had great efficacy in curing me, if I am cured, of my troublesome propensities; and that was the utter *unavailingness* of my resentments. When I was affronted, and determined to shew it, I soon discovered that nobody cared much whether I was pleased or angry. People in general seemed perfectly contented to wait till my anger was over. A few more good tempered ones, who endeavoured to explain and to conciliate, I could see smiled secretly at my infirmity; while the more ill-natured laughed at it without disguise. So that I found I was always the chief sufferer, and the chief loser, by my ill humour. When, from motives of pique, I absented myself from any company, the circumstance, as I have had opportunities enough of discovering, excited no regret; but very often the reverse: so that I began to be thoroughly tired of indulging resentments which punished no one but myself.

As it is common to pass from one extreme to another, so I am suspected by some of having now become too insensible to this sort of injury. Whether that be the case I will not determine; but this I know, that if I err on this side, it is the most peaceful and comfortable fault I ever fell into. In fact it is so difficult a thing to offend me now, that those—if there are any such—who would wish to do so, must I am sure give up the attempt in despair. I am far from being ignorant that I occasionally experience, like other people, little slights and neglects from the carelessness, selfishness, or ill-nature of my neighbours; but as this rarely happens from those whom I love and esteem, I must confess that it gives the smallest possible disturbance to my tranquillity. If any one treats me with rudeness or neglect, I perceive that that person knows not how to behave; and I feel the same sort of compassion and indulgence towards the party that one does on remarking any other species of awkwardness in ill-bred people.

As to my happiness, that is so greatly independent of others—so much regulated by my own conduct and internal tranquillity—that it cannot be moved by such things. It is, indeed, since I have learned the happy art of looking within for entertainment and satisfaction, and depended on my own resources, that I have become so much less troublesome to others than formerly. And it is well for me that this change has taken place; for as I am now growing

old, and have nothing to recommend me to the notice of any one, being neither rich, nor witty, nor entertaining; think, I beseech you, what an unhappy and forlorn creature I should be if my happiness still depended upon the flattering attentions of my neighbours: I assure you if that were the case, I should have little enough! And while I am upon this subject I will take the liberty to say, that it does appear to me that much of the dissatisfaction, fretfulness, and uneasiness, visible in persons in the decline of life, especially in those who are solitary, is owing to their not having independence of mind enough to make them indifferent to the neglect which is too often the lot of age. The most obscure and despised individual who thus rises above her circumstances, and finds content within, is far more respectable, and enjoys a much more permanent and sterling species of happiness, than the most admired coquette, or the most richly bedizened dowager, who depends, for the maintenance of her happiness, like the meanest mendicants, on the crumbs of admiration and respect that are thrown to her by the surrounding crowd.

But I perceive that, like other old folks, I have wandered from my subject, and, forgetting that I am writing for the young, have been lecturing the old. However I am well persuaded that the same dispositions that are necessary to respectability and happiness at one period of life, are equally so at

another: and she or he who would have a cheerful, peaceful, and respectable old age, must learn in youth to build happiness on a true foundation. To return to the subject on which I set out, I will just say, that while I am so remarkably backward in taking offence, I hope I am equally reluctant to give it; and should be sincerely sorry if any remarks I have at present made should have such an effect on any of my readers. If however I may have unintentionally *hurt* any one, I humbly hope that they will prove that my advice has not been quite lost upon them, by a generous act of forgiveness towards the unknown offender; and that in future, as often as occasion may require, the same indulgence may be extended towards others: for truly when one comes impartially to consider the degrees of uneasiness that the temper of which we have been speaking occasions, I doubt if one should find a very great deal to choose between a troublesome friend, and a troublesome enemy.

I am, my dear reader,

your humble servant,

DOROTHY.

XI.

A LETTER TO A FRIEND

My Dear ——

..... THAT dissatisfaction with the daily routine of life—life without an object, of which you complain is, I believe, most keenly felt by persons of energetic minds. . . . For those who have no external objects of interest, there remain only two resources:—Some interesting intellectual pursuit—and that degree of spirituality of mind which makes religion our happiness, as well as our safety. The former cannot always be obtained; for unless an employment has some *sufficient object*, the mind soon becomes disgusted:—it inquires—What am I taking all this trouble for? But the latter is always attainable; and the great objects of another life are, we feel, alone capable of filling and satisfying the cravings of our minds. When the mind is in a vigorous state with respect to these objects, it is not liable

to suffer from lassitude, or to feel disgust under any circumstances. If any thing need be sought for to add to the happiness of a mind habitually holding communion with God, it is the pleasures of intellect—those, I mean, of that higher order which naturally blend and harmonize with devotional feelings, and the hopes of futurity. There are many pursuits, many attainments, which I once thought very desirable, that I now perceive to be, in their nature, trifling. But the longer I live, the more I prize and wish to cultivate an intellectual taste. A romantic sentimental turn of mind, such as is common in youth, does but render one more susceptible to the disgusts of life; but this, elevates the mind above them, and is a support in the midst of them. It is also a great preservative against that littleness of soul—those meannesses, jealousies, and petty competitions to which the female mind is so prone. This intellectual taste is perhaps incompatible with the interests and detail of domestic life. But I have been supposing the case of those who are not thus occupied.

To one who has a good hope through grace, and who does in so good a degree adorn the doctrine of her God and Saviour; it seems almost superfluous to wish or to recommend any thing more. Yet, as the activity of our minds will find some employment, some interest in this world, it is certainly desirable

to give this activity the best direction possible : and indeed, I believe, that a mind well furnished with human knowledge, and a cultivated taste, possesses what are, or may be, useful auxiliaries in the Christian life ; and where it is in our power to acquire them, without making a sacrifice of higher duties, I think we are well employed in so doing. I would not have presumed to say any thing on this subject, if you had not repeatedly requested it ; and you know I am fully aware of the causes which induced you to relinquish pursuits in which, it is no flattery to say, you were very likely to excel. But now I believe you are convinced that no real objections remain ; and as you are shut out so much from social pleasures, and the enjoyments of friendship, I am persuaded your mind would be greatly invigorated, and would be less liable to prey upon itself, if it were more occupied upon general subjects. That enlargement of mind which is so desirable for enabling us to form correct ideas on all subjects, is only to be acquired by general reading. It would give me great pleasure, especially if I were better qualified, to recommend a course of study of this kind ; but in such a situation as you are in at — it is scarcely possible to procure the works of the best writers. Unless, therefore, you were within reach of a *good* library, it would be useless to dictate. This is an advantage which I have never

fully possessed; but I have availed myself of what came in my way. Perhaps the time may come when you will be very differently circumstanced in this respect. In the mean time, would you think it irksome, or inconsistent with your present duties, to make some of those acquirements in which many of our sex have made great proficiency, and for which I think you have a decided talent! For instance:—the languages. In the acquisition of Hebrew and Greek there is a use and an object worthy the ambition of a Christian; and I have been assured by good scholars that, to acquire so much of these languages as enables one to read the original Scriptures with intelligence, is no difficult matter. A critical knowledge of them is a very different thing. And this is not necessary, at least, to a female student. I have known ladies who could translate a chapter from the Hebrew Bible after studying the language a few months: and the satisfaction derived from the attainment is great.

I hope you will not think that I am assuming too much in giving this advice. I would not do it if I were not persuaded that some such pursuit would be highly advantageous to your mind; and would prove an alleviation to some of its sorrows. There is a great difference between a study of this kind, in which there is an important object, and which is always found greatly to strengthen

and enlarge the mind—and mere accomplishments, which, though they may have their use, are of very inferior importance; and to which one could not conscientiously devote *much* time. It would be easy to procure the few books needful to prosecute any studies of the kind I have alluded to: and although a master would greatly facilitate your progress, yet this help is by no means necessary; many who have made the greatest proficiency have been self-taught.

. XLI.

ONE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED AND, TWENTY TWO.

EDWARD, a thoughtful lad, when happily seated beside his father and mother, on sabbath evenings, encouraged by their pious and judicious conversation, often communicated his thoughts to them with freedom and simplicity.

“ You know, papa,” said he, “ that Mr. ———, this afternoon, reminded us how nearly we had

arrived at the close of another year ; and, how much he endeavoured to impress us with the thought ; saying, that although but one month of the present year now remained, yet it was likely that some one at least of that large congregation would never live to see a new year ; and, that we ought each of us to realize the possibility of the case being ours ; and then he said, that it would not do to presume even upon another month ; but that a week, a day, an hour, a moment, might be all that remained to some of us."

FATHER. Well, my dear !

EDWARD. Well, and all this was very true, and very impressive, was it not ? And yet, whenever I hear ministers say that sort of thing, somehow, I never feel much impressed by it, but I always think that I shall not really die so soon ; perhaps, because I have heard it so often, and it has never happened yet. This I am sure is very wrong, but I don't know how to help it.

FATHER. Because such an event is not probable, its being possible does not duly affect us. ' The mind instantly relieves itself from a painful thought, which hope can so easily elude.

MOTHER. There is a common saying, used often with great levity, which I own with me has much more force than any such reflections, and for this reason, that there is no possibility of evading it.

EDWARD. What is that, mamma !

MOTHER. Did you never hear persons say when any thing has happened, either good or bad—"It will be all the same a hundred years hence?"

EDWARD. Yes, often.

MOTHER. Well, that short sentence is a sermon to me. The whole weight of eternity hangs upon it, and it reduces all the interests of time to their true insignificance.

EDWARD. But a hundred years is such a very long while!

MOTHER. It seems so to you. But recollect, Time never stops, and that every year we live seems to be shorter than the last.

FATHER. I have already lived nearly half as long, and I can assure you, the years that have passed since I was a lad like you, appear only like a tale that is told; and I know that the remaining half, even if it were at all probable that I should reach such extreme old age, would seem to fly very much faster.

MOTHER. But although there can be no rational doubt that even fifty years hence, I shall not only have entered the unseen world, but shall be by that time an old inhabitant of it, and familiar with its mysteries: yet, we will not now speak of uncertainties, from which the mind can so easily escape; we will not therefore say twenty or fifty years to come; because, by the barest possibility, the oldest of us here might live so long; but, in

the year *one thousand nine hundred and twenty-two*, you, Edward, as well as your parents, will have entered on the future state, and our very names perhaps, will scarcely be remembered on the earth.

FATHER. This thought will bear pursuing; the more we dwell upon it, the deeper is the impression. To name this certain date, and say, *then* my eternal doom will be fixed; truly it is overwhelming, but it is our own faults if it does not also inspire us with unspeakable joy.

MOTHER. It is a thought that I would fain make more and more familiar to my mind. There is no day that passes in which I do not, many times in the course of it, need the powerful influence of such a reflection, to tranquillize, and moderate, and regulate my feelings. It should make us ashamed of being disquieted by the petty vexations of life, as well as of our eagerness for its transient pleasures. It would also be an unfailing solace under the heaviest trials.

EDWARD. But, because life will then certainly be over, ought we to be quite indifferent about what happens to us in it?

FATHER. There is little danger, my dear, of our being too indifferent to our earthly interests. Do what we will, with all our watchfulness, prayers, and meditations; even Christians generally (except in a few rare and happy instances) love this world too

well, and care inordinately for their comfortable accommodation in it. So that our wisdom is to cherish every consideration that tends to weaken our earthly attachments.

MOTHER. We should endeavour to view the events of life as we know we shall view them by and bye. In the year *one thousand nine hundred and twenty-two*, in whatever state I may then be, I am quite sure of this, that those things which now deeply interest me, will be subjects of entire indifference, except, as parts of the necessary discipline and probation, through which I was to pass. As we now reflect upon a day of amusement when it is over, or upon hours of bodily pain when in the enjoyment of health and ease, so, from the unseen world, we shall regard all that pleases, pains, or agitates us now; and doubtless, the degree of interest we feel in these things, will then be matter of our greatest astonishment.

EDWARD. But papa, in the Psalms and the Proverbs, and in many parts of the Bible, how much is said about prosperity in this life. I am sure Solomon, and even David, and Job, and all of them, seemed to wish to enjoy themselves very much.

FATHER. And in this we are sure to imitate them, however we may fail to copy their example in other respects; but we must remember, that in Old Testament times, "Life and Immortality were not clearly brought to light;" and nothing is more strik-

ing, than the different manner of speaking about the things of this world, employed by the writers in the Old Testament and the New, a difference which we are too apt to overlook. Now we are told to "rejoice, as though we rejoiced not, and to weep, as though we wept not, because the fashion of this world passes away."

MOTHER. It is Lord Bacon, I think, who says, "*Prosperity* is the promise of the Old Testament, and *Adversity* is the promise of the New.

FATHER. The dispensations of Providence in the world are the clearest indications of how small account is the brief period of our earthly existence in His sight, who sees the end from the beginning. And surely it is our wisdom to endeavour to view all circumstances as God views them. Things would not be suffered to go on as they do in this disorderly world, if that degree of importance which we attach to the interests of life really belonged to them. When we read the history of nations, or of individuals, or observe the events of private life, we are ready to wonder that injustice and oppression should be so often suffered to prevail, that falsehood and selfish policy should sometimes seem successful, while truth, honesty, and disinterestedness are misinterpreted and unrewarded; and that the designs of craft, envy, and malignity, should ever appear to triumph. But we forget how short is their triumph. God, from that throne where He sits

"judging right," bears with our impatient complaints, and with the hard and murmuring thoughts we are apt to entertain of his righteous government, knowing how soon all will be rectified. "One day is with Him as a thousand years;" and He sees that day as though it were already come, when the complicated mass of human affairs will appear arranged and adjusted according to the strictest rules of truth and equity, in the view of the assembled universe. *Then all wrong will be set right*; what a quieting consideration! David himself, amid the trials and persecutions he met with, says, "he should have fainted unless he had believed it."

MOTHER. And it is but a little while to wait. When once death has drawn aside the veil that is upon our hearts, all that we now call mysterious, both in Providence and grace (at least in relation to ourselves) will, we may reasonably suppose, be as suddenly and clearly revealed as the indistinct objects in a dark night, if the sun were in one moment to be darted to the meridian sky.

FATHER. Yes, and this must be the case, whether we enter upon a state of happiness or misery. But who can conceive of the intolerable torments of self-reproach which must attend the discovery in the latter alternative! Surely it were of itself a hell of misery, to see in the light of those inextinguish-

able fires, the true value of those things for which heaven was bartered !

EDWARD. What a good thing it would be, if we could but see it so now !

FATHER. Let us remember, my dear boy, that the light of God's word shines with sufficient clearness to shew all objects distinctly ; if we do but also seek the illumination of His spirit. This light, though shining in a dark place, would at all times guide us safely and pleasantly along the narrow way.

MOTHER. You know, dear Edward, how anxious we are, and what exertions we make, that seven years hence you may be in a respectable and prosperous condition ; qualified to pass successfully through life. You feel too, I am sure, the importance of it yourself, and this anxiety and care, if subordinate, are natural and right. But let us, my dear child, with deeper anxiety and more strenuous exertion, prepare for a period, perhaps rather more distant, but which, after all, may be much nearer. Let us only extend the date a little further, make a very slight alteration in the figures, and be chiefly concerned for your interests *then*. Oh, that you may be in prosperous circumstances a hundred years hence ! Astronomers calculate the positions of the planets, and politicians speculate about the state of affairs at that period ; and shall

not we make as long a calculation in relation to our own personal interests! Oh, whatever may befall us during the fleeting interval, let us give the utmost diligence, that all may be well with us in the year *one thousand nine hundred and twenty-two*.

Thus ended their conversation, and the writer can think of no better advice wherewith to sum up the exhortations she has from time to time addressed to her kind and candid readers. Very earnestly therefore requesting their attention to it, she must, for the present, affectionately bid them farewell

